

THE ARGOSY.

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COURT NETHERLEIGH.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER XVI.

AN UNPLEASANT RUMOUR.

ONCE more a year has gone its round, bringing again to London all the stir and bustle of another season. It is a lovely afternoon in May, and there is some slight commotion in Chenevix House. Only the commotion of an unexpected arrival. Lady Mary Cleveland, with her infant child and its nurse, had come up from Netherleigh on a short visit. The infant, barely four weeks old yet, was a very small and fretful young gentleman, who had chosen to make his appearance in the world two good months before the world expected him.

Nobody was at home but Lady Grace. She ran down the stairs to welcome her sister.

"My dear Mary! I am so glad to see you! We did not expect you until Monday. You are doubly welcome."

"I thought it would make no difference—my coming a few days earlier, and without warning you," said Lady Mary, as she kissed her elder sister. "I am not very strong, Grace, and Mr. Forth has been anxious that I should have a change. This morning was so warm and fine, and I felt so languid, that he said to me, 'Why not start to-day?' So he and my husband packed me off, whether I would or no. Where's mamma?"

"Mamma and Harriet are out somewhere. Gone to see the pictures, I think," added Grace, as Lady Mary turned, of her own accord, into a small, cosey sitting-room that used to belong to the girls, and which they had nicknamed the "Hut."

Lady Mary looked surprised. "Harriet! Are the MacIvors here?"

"Oh dear, yes; staying with us. They came up from Scotland on Monday."

"I am rather sorry I came, then. It may be an inconvenience. And there won't be a bit of quiet in the house."

"It will be no inconvenience at all, Mary—what are you thinking of? You are to have your old room, and the baby the room next it. As to the house, it shall be as quiet as you please. I assure you it is wonderfully changed, in that respect, since all you girls were at home together."

"That time seems ages ago," remarked Lady Mary. "What light-headed, frivolous girls we were—and how life's cares change us! Fancy our all marrying and leaving you behind!"

"There's Frances, also."

"I forgot Frances. She is at Sarah's, I suppose, as usual. She will be marrying next, no doubt. I always thought she would be one of the first to marry, though she is the youngest except Adela. And then it will be your turn, Grace."

Grace slightly shook her head. "It will never be mine, Mary—as I believe. I have settled down into an old maid—and I feel like one. I would rather not marry now; at least, I think so. The time has gone by for it."

"What nonsense you talk! Why, you are only about three or four and thirty, Grace, though you are the eldest. A woman is not too old to marry, at that age."

"Well, I am not anxious to marry," replied Grace. "Papa and mamma should have one of us with them in their old age; and Frances will no doubt marry. It will, I know, be all as God pleases. Morning by morning as I get up, I put myself into His good care, and beseech Him to undertake for me—to use me as He will."

Lady Mary Cleveland smiled. This was all very right, of course—Grace had always had a religious corner in her heart.

"And now tell me all the news of Netherleigh," began Grace, when her sister had taken some refreshment, and the small mite of a baby was asleep, and they were back again in the "Hut," Mary lying on the sofa. "How is Aunt Margery?"

"You have had this room refurnished!" cried Mary, looking about her—at the bright carpet and chintz curtains.

"Yes, this spring. It was so very shabby."

"It is very pretty now. Aunt Margery?—oh, she is fairly well. Not too strong, I fancy. I went to the Court yesterday and had lunch with her. She is my baby's godmother."

"Is she? The baby's christened, then?"

"As if we should bring him away from home if he were not! You will laugh at his old-fashioned name, Grace—Thomas."

"Thomas is a very good name. It is your husband's."

"Yes—and not one of his first wife's children bear it. So I thought it high time this one should."

"Why did your husband not bring you up to-day?"

"Because he has two funerals this afternoon—people are sure to

die at the wrong time," added Lady Mary, quaintly. "And the vicar of the next parish, who is always ready to help him, is away this week."

"And the godfathers?—who are they, Mary?"

"My husband is one of them; he has stood to all his children. The other is Oscar Dalrymple."

"Oscar Dalrymple?" echoed Grace.

"Yes. He is not a general favourite, but Mr. Cleveland likes him. And he thinks he has behaved very well in this wretched business of Selina's. The one we should have preferred to have for godfather, we did not like to ask—if you can understand that apparent contradiction, Gracie."

"And who was that?" asked Grace, looking up.

"Mr. Grubb. He has been so very, very kind to us, and we like and respect him so greatly, above all other men on the face of the earth, that we quite longed to ask him to stand to the poor little waif. On the other hand, he is so wealthy and so generous that my husband thought it might look like coveting more benefits. And so we fixed on Mr. Dalrymple."

Grace mused.

"I never use my beautiful pony-carriage but I feel grateful to Mr. Grubb," went on Lady Mary. "And look how good he has been in regard to Charles!"

A slight frown at the last word contracted Grace's fair and open brow, as though the name wrought her some kind of discomfort. It was smoothed away at once.

"Are the Dalrymples still at Moat Grange?" she asked.

"Still there; living like hermits, in the most inexpensive manner possible, with two servants only—or three, I forget which. Two maids, I think it is; and a man, who has to do the garden—as much as one man can do of it—and feed the two pigs, and milk the cow, and see to the cocks and hens."

A smile crossed Grace's lips. "Does Selina like that kind of life?"

"Selina *has* to like it; at any rate, to put up with it, and she does it with a good grace. It is she who has reduced Oscar to poverty: the least she can do is to share in his retirement and retrenchments without murmuring. Oscar is trying to let Moat Grange, but does not seem able to succeed. His own little place, Knutford, was let for seven years when he came in to Moat Grange, so they cannot retire to that."

"It was very sad of Selina to act so," sighed Grace.

"It was unpardonable," corrected Lady Mary. "She knew how limited her husband's income was. Thoughtlessness runs in the Dalrymple family. Poor Mrs. Dalrymple wanted to give up the cottage and the income Oscar allows her, and go out into the world to shift for herself; but Oscar would not hear of it. We respect him for it. Close he may be, rather crabbed in temper; but he has a

keen sense of honour. Mr. Grubb's sister, Mary Lynn, comes sometimes to Netherleigh to spend a week with Mrs. Dalrymple—who was to have been Mary's mother-in-law, had things gone straight with Robert. What a sweet girl she is !”

“I have always thought Mary Lynn that, since I knew her.”

“Do you see Alice Dalrymple often ?” continued Lady Mary.

“Pretty often, save when the Hopes are in Gloucestershire. Alice looks very delicate.”

“Is the Colonel reconciled to Gerard yet ?”

“No ; and not likely to be. Poor Gerard is somewhere abroad.”

“And my husband's boy, Charley—do you see much of him, Grace ?”

“Oh, we see him now and then,” replied Grace in a tone of constraint.

“Adela has quite taken him up, we find. It is a relief to us, for we feared she might not ; might even, we thought, resent having him in the house. How kind Mr. Grubb was over that ; how considerably thoughtful !” continued Lady Mary. “None can know how truly good he is !”

“You are right there,” acquiesced Grace. “But he does not always find his reward.”

“How does Adela behave to him now ?” questioned Lady Mary. She had applied the last remark to her sister Adela, and dropped her voice as she asked it.

“Just as usual. There's no improvement in her.”

The previous summer, when the marriage of Lady Mary Chenevix took place with Mr. Cleveland, he, the Rector, came up the day before it, and stayed at Mr. Grubb's by invitation, to be in readiness for the morrow's ceremony. Mr. Grubb liked the Rector ; he had felt deeply sorry for him when he was left a widower with so many children, and was glad he was going to have a new helpmate and they a second mother. That night, as they sat talking together after dinner—Adela being at her mother's, deep in all the wedding paraphernalia—the Rector opened his heart and his sorrows to Mr. Grubb : what a care his children were to him, and what he should do to place his many sons out in life. Charles, the second, was chiefly on his mind now. The eldest son, Harry, was in the army, and getting on well, expected to get his company soon. Charles, who was then twenty years of age, had been intended for the Church, but he had never taken to the idea kindly, and was now evincing a most unconquerable dislike to it. “I cannot force him into it,” said the Rector sadly, “I must find some other opening for him. He must go out and begin to earn a living somehow—I have too many of them at home. I—suppose”—he added, in a hesitating tone of deprecation—“you could not make room for him in Leadenhall Street ?” But Mr. Grubb told the Rector that he would gladly make room for him ; and, amid the grateful thanks of the Rector, it was decided upon, there and then, Mr. Grubb being most liberal in his arrangements. “I must

find him a lodging," said the Rector; "perhaps some family would take him and board him." "No, no; he had better come here," said Mr. Grubb; "provided Adela makes no objection. Strange lodgings are the ruin of many a young fellow—and will be of many more. London lodgings are no true home for young men; they take to go abroad at night out of sheer loneliness, get exposed to the temptations of this most dangerous city, teeming with its specious allurements, and fall helplessly into its evil ways. Your son, Mr. Cleveland, shall come here and be sheltered from the danger, if my wife will have him."

Lady Adela apathetically consented, when the proposal was made to her: the lad might come if he liked, she did not care, was all she answered. And so Charles Cleveland came: and his father believed and declared that no man had ever been so good and generous as Mr. Grubb.

A tall, slender, gentlemanly, dark-eyed, and very handsome and somewhat idle young fellow Mr. Charles Cleveland turned out to be. He took well enough to his duties in the counting-house, far better than he had taken to Latin and Greek and theology: and Mr. Grubb was as kind to him as could be; and the more active partner, Mr. Howard, not too severe.

But at the close of winter, when Charles Cleveland had been some months located in Grosvenor Square, Lady Adela began to show herself very foolish. She struck up a flirtation with him. Whether it was done out of sheer ennui at the prolonged cold weather, or in very thoughtlessness, or by way of inventing another source of vexation for her husband, Adela set up a strong flirtation with Charles Cleveland, and the world was already talking of it and laughing at it. The matter, absurd though it was in itself, was vexing Grace Chenevix, and her sister's mention of Charley brought the vexation before her.

"We heard something about Adela last week," spoke Lady Mary, maintaining her low tone, "not at all creditable to her: but we hope it is not true."

Grace Chenevix felt her face flush. She assumed that her sister alluded to what was filling her thoughts, and she would have been glad to be spared speaking of it.

"It is but nonsense, Mary. It comes of sheer idle thoughtlessness on Adela's part, nothing more. Rely upon that."

"I am glad to hear you say so, Grace. But—do you ever go there with her?"

"Go where with her?"

"To Lady Sanely's."

The two sisters gazed at one another. They were at cross purposes.

"To Lady Sanely's?" exclaimed Grace in surprise. "I don't go there with Adela; I don't go there at all. Mamma has scarcely any acquaintance with Lady Sanely."

"Then how can you speak so confidently?" returned Mary

Cleveland. "Adela may be quite deep in the mischief, for all you know."

"Mary, I do not understand you. You must explain what you mean."

"It is said," whispered Mary, glancing round at the walls, as if to reassure herself no one else was present, "that Adela has taken to gambling. That ——"

"To gambling?" gasped Grace.

Lady Mary nodded. "It is said that gambling to a very dangerous extent is carried on at Lady Sanely's; and that Adela has been drawn into the snare, and goes there nightly, and plays deeply. How do you think we heard this?"

"Heaven knows," cried poor Grace, feeling a conviction that it might be true.

"From Harry; my husband's eldest son. He has got his promotion at last, as perhaps you know, and is daily expecting orders to embark for India. He ran down last week to see us, and it was he who mentioned it. My husband told him to be careful; that it could not be true. Harry maintained that it was true, and was, moreover, quite well known. He said he thought Lord Acorn was aware of it—but that Mr. Grubb was not."

"Papa *cannot* be aware of it," disputed Grace.

"Don't make too sure of it, Grace. Papa does a little in that line himself, you know; he may not look upon it in the dreadful light that you do, or that we people do in a rustic parsonage. Anyway, Harry says there's no mistake about Adela."

"Mr. Grubb ought to be warned—that he may save her."

"It is what my husband says—that Mr. Grubb ought to be told. I hope Adela has enough petty sins on her conscience!"

"This is the worst of all. She may ruin her husband, rich though he is."

"As poor Robert Dalrymple ruined himself. Scarcely that, however, in this case, Gracie. Mr. Grubb cannot be brought to ruin blindfold by his wife: and, it strikes me, he will take very good care, for her sake as well as his own, that she does not bring him to it. But he ought to be told without delay."

Grace Chenevix fell into one of the most unpleasant reveries she had ever experienced. Adela went often to Lady Sanely's; she knew that. Another moment, and Lord Acorn came in.

"Papa," cried Lady Mary, after she had greeted her father, "we were talking of Adela. A rumour reached us at Netherleigh that she was growing too fond of card-playing. It is carried on to a high extent at Lady Sanely's house, as we are led to believe, and that Adela is often there, and joining in it."

"Ay, they go in for tolerably high stakes at Lady Sanely's," replied the Earl, in his careless, not to say supercilious manner. "Very silly of Adela!"

"It is true then, papa!" gasped Grace.

"True enough," he remarked. "I daresay, though, Adela can take care of her purse-strings, and draw them in when necessary."

"How indifferent papa is!" thought Grace, with a sigh.

She was anything but indifferent. She was thinking what it might be best to do; how save Adela from further folly. After dinner, when the carriage came round to take her mother and Harriet to a small early gathering at old Lady Cust's, and Mary, tired with her day's journey, had retired for the night, Grace suddenly spoke.

"Mamma, I think, if you have no objection, I will go with you in the carriage and let it leave me at Adela's. I should like to sit an hour with her."

"I have no objection," was the answer of Lady Acorn, spoken rather tartly, as usual; for she lived in a chronic state of dissatisfaction with her daughter Adela. "Go, if you like. And just give her a hint to mend her manners, Grace, with regard to that boy."

"*That* is pure idle pastime," was the mental comment of Grace Chenevix. "This other may be worse."

CHAPTER XVII.

FLIRTATION.

THEY stood together in the dusk of the evening, the tempter and the deceived. Really it is not too much so to designate them. She, one of the fairest of earth's fair daughters, leaned in a listless attitude against the window-frame, looking out on the square. Perhaps, listening: for a woman of misery, with three children round her, was singing her doleful ditty there, and gazing up at the noble mansion as if she hoped some poor mite might be dropped to her from its superfluity of wealth. The children were thin and haggard, with that sharp, pinching look of *age* in their faces so unsuited to childhood, and which never comes but from famine and long-continued wretchedness. The mother—she was little more than a girl—made a halt opposite the window: her eye had caught the beautiful face enshrined there amidst the curtains, and she sang out louder and more piteously than ever.

"Now I think that's real—no imposture—none of those made-up cases that the Mendicity Society look up and expose."

The remark came from a young man, who was likewise looking out, a very good-looking young fellow of prepossessing countenance. There was an air of tenderness in his manner as he spoke, implying tenderness of heart for her who stood by him. And the Lady Adela roused herself, and carelessly asked, "What's real?" For her mind and thoughts had been dwelling on invisible and absent things, and the poverty and the singing had remained to her as though it had not been.

"That poor wretch there, and those famished children. That one

—the boy—looks as if he had not tasted food for a week. See how he fixes his eyes up here ! I am sure they are famished.”

“Oh, Charles, don’t talk so ! Street beggars ought not to be allowed to bring the sight of their misery here. It makes one shiver. They should confine themselves to the City, and such like low parts.”

“What’s that about the City,” inquired Mr. Grubb, who had entered and caught the last words ; while the young man, Charley Cleveland, moving listlessly towards a distant window, stealthily threw a shilling from it, and then quitted the room.

“Street beggars,” answered Adela. “I say they ought not to be allowed out of the City, exposing their rags and their wretchedness to us ! It is too bad.”

“The City is much obliged to you,” said her husband, in a marked manner, as if implying that he belonged to it. And the Lady Adela shrugged her shoulders in very French fashion, the gesture betraying contempt for the speaker and his words.

“Adela,” he said, quietly drawing her to a sofa and sitting down beside her, “I have long wanted a few minutes’ serious talk with you ; and I have put it off from day to day, for the subject is full of pain to me, as it ought to be to you. Of shame, I had almost said.”

She turned her lovely eyes upon him. He could see the hard and defiant expression they took, even in the twilight gloom.

“You may spare yourself the trouble of a lecture—if that is what you intend. It will do me no good.”

“Whether it will do you good or not, you must hear it. Your behaviour —”

She interrupted him, humming a merry tune.

“Adela, listen to me,” he resumed ; and perhaps it was the first time she had heard from him so peremptory a tone. “Your behaviour is not what it ought to be ; it is not wise or seemly ; and you must alter it.”

“So you have told me ever since we were married, all the four years and the odd months,” she said, with a half-playful, half-mocking laugh.

“Of your behaviour to *me* I have told you so repeatedly and uselessly that I have now dropped the subject for ever. What I would now speak of is your behaviour to young Cleveland. The world is beginning to notice it ; and, Adela, what is objectionable in it *shall* be discontinued.”

“There is nothing objectionable—except in your imagination.”

“There is : and you know it, Adela. You may treat me as you like ; I cannot, unfortunately, alter that ; but I will guard *you* from being talked of. As to Cleveland —”

“Charley,” she broke in, turning her head to look for him ; “Charley, do you hear my husband ? He would like to — I thought Charley was here.”

"Had he been here I should not have spoken," was Mr. Grubb's reply, the signs of mortification stirring his refined and sensitive lips.

"Is your rôle going to be that of a jealous husband at last?"

"No," he replied. "You have striven, with unnecessary endeavour, to deaden the love for you which once filled my heart; if that love has not turned to gall and bitterness, it is not your fault. This is not a case for jealousy, Adela. You must know that I am jealous of a schoolboy!"

"What is it a case of, then?"

"Your fair reputation. That shall be cared for in the eyes of the world."

"There is no necessity for your caring for it," she retorted. "My reputation—and your honour—are perfectly safe in my own keeping. There lives not a man who could bring disgrace upon me. You are out of your senses, Mr. Grubb."

"That my honour is safe I do not doubt," he returned, drawing himself slightly up. "Forgive me if my words could have borne any other construction. I speak only of your reputation for folly—frivolity. The world is laughing at you: and I do not choose that it shall laugh."

A shade of annoyance flashed into her pretty face. "The world is nothing to me. It had better laugh at itself."

"Perfectly true. But I must take care it does not laugh at you. Your mother spoke to me to-day about Charles Cleveland. She called you a child, Adela; and she said if I did not interfere and put a stop to it, she should."

"Let my mother mind her own affairs," was Adela's answer, full of resentment. "She can dictate to the two who are left to her, but not to the rest of us. When we married, we passed out of her control."

"Surely not. Your mother is always your mother."

"Pray where did you see her? Has it come to secret meetings, in which my conduct is discussed?"

"Nonsense, Adela! Lady Acorn came to see me in Leadenhall Street, upon other matters."

"And so you got up a nice little mare's nest between you! That I was too fond of Charley Cleveland, and ought to be put in irons for it!"

"That you were too *free* with him, Adela," corrected her husband. "That your manners with him, chiefly in this your own house, were losing that reserve which ought to temper them, though he is but a boy. It was she who said the world was laughing at you."

"And what did you say?" asked Lady Adela, with an ill-concealed sneer.

"I said nothing," he replied, a sort of sadness in his tone. "I *could* have said that the subject had for some little time been to me a source of annoyance; and I might have added that if I had refrained from remonstrance, it was because remonstrance from me to my wife had ever been worse than useless."

"That's true enough, sir. Then why attempt it now?"

"For your own sake. And in years to come, when time shall have brought to you sense and feeling, you will thank me for being more careful of your fair fame than you seem inclined to be yourself. I do not wish to pursue the subject, Adela; let the hint I have given you avail. Be more circumspect in your manners to young Cleveland. You know perfectly well that you are pursuing this senseless flirtation with him for one sole end—to vex me: you really care no more for him than for the wind that passes. But society, you see, not being behind the scenes, may be apt to attribute other motives to you. Change your tactics, *be true to yourself*; and then ——"

"And then? Well?"

"I shall not be called upon to interpose my authority. To do so would be against my inclination and Charles Cleveland's interests."

"*Your* authority!" she retorted in a blaze of scorn—for if there was one thing that put out Lady Adela more than another, it was to be lectured: and she certainly did not like to be told that the world was laughing at her. "Have I ever altered my manners for any authority you could bring to bear?—do you suppose that I shall alter them now? Go and preach to your people in the City, if you must preach somewhere."

"Lady Grace Chenevix," interrupted the groom of the chambers, throwing wide the door,

"You are all in the dark!" exclaimed Grace. "I took the chance of finding you at home, Adela. Mamma and Harriet are gone to the Dowager Cust's."

"I am glad you came, Grace," said Mr. Grubb, ringing for lights. "I wanted to look in at the club for half an hour: you will stay with Lady Adela."

"Grace," to his sister-in-law, "*Lady* Adela," to his wife: what did that tell? Any way, it told that he had been provoked almost beyond bearing.

"Mary came up this afternoon, taking us by surprise," began Grace, as Mr. Grubb left the room, and the man retired after lighting the wax-lights. "She does not seem strong; and the baby is such a poor little ——"

"Pray are you a party to this conspiracy between my mother and him?" unceremoniously interposed Adela, with a fling of her hand towards the door by which her husband had disappeared, to indicate whom she meant by "him;" and the words were the first she had condescended to speak to her sister since her entrance.

"Conspiracy? I don't know of any," answered Grace, wondering what was coming.

"Had you been a few moments earlier, you would have found him holding forth about Charley Cleveland. And he said my mother went to him in the City to-day to put him up to it."

"Oh, if you mean about Charley Cleveland, I was going to speak

to you of it myself. You are getting quite absurd about him, Adela. Or he is about you. It was said at Brookes's, the other day, that Charley Cleveland was losing his head for Lady Adela Grubb."

Lady Adela laughed. "Who said it, Gracie?"

"Oh, I don't know; a lot of them were together. Captain Foster, and Cust, and Lord Deerhum, and Booby Charteries, and others. It seems Charley was a little overcome the previous evening. He and his brother had been dining with the Guards, very freely, and afterwards they went to—I forget the place—somewhere that young men do go to of an evening, and Charley finished himself up with brandy and cigars; and then he managed to hiccup out, that the only angel living upon earth was Lady Adela Grubb."

"And that's all!" she said, lightly—"that Charley called me an angel! I told him it was a mare's-nest."

"No, it is not all," quickly answered Lady Grace. "It might be all, if it were not for your folly. I have seen Charley hold your hand in his; I have seen him kiss it; I have seen him bend forward and whisper to you until his hair has all but touched yours. It is very bad, Adela."

"It is very amusing; it serves to pass away the time," laughed Lady Adela. "And, pray, Grace, how came you to know so much of what they say and do at their clubs?"

"That's one of the annoying parts of it. Colonel Hope heard it; he was present. He went home, shocked and scared, to tell Sarah; and Sarah came yesterday morning and told mamma."

"Shocked and scared too? I should like to have seen Sarah's long face!"

"You should have seen mamma's. No wonder she went down to your husband. But that is not all yet, Adela. One of them, I think it was Lord Deerhum—whoever it was, had dined here a night or two before—told the others that you flirted with Charley desperately before your husband's eyes, and that while you showed favour to the one, you snubbed the other."

"And it's true," coolly avowed Adela. "I like Charley Cleveland, and I *choose* to flirt with him. But if you strait-coated people think I have any wrong liking for him, you err woefully. Grace, all this is but idle talk. I shall *never* compromise myself by so much as a hazardous word, for Charley, or for anyone else. I have just told *him* so."

"Pleasant! the necessity for such an assertion to one's lord and master!"

"I never loved anybody in my life; and I'm sure I am not going to begin now. Not even Captain Stanley—though I did have a passing liking for him. Perhaps you will be surprised to hear, Grace, that there were odd moments in my life during the first year or two after my marriage, when I was nearer loving Francis Grubb than I had been of loving anyone—only that I had set out by steeling my heart against him."

Grace gazed at her sister wonderingly.

"But that's all past : and of love I feel none for any mortal man, and don't mean to feel it. But I like amusement—and I am amusing myself with Charley Cleveland."

"You have no right to do it, Adela. What is but sport to you, as it seems, may be death to him."

"That is his look-out," laughed Adela. "My private belief is, if you care to know it, that my husband was thinking as much of Charley as of me when he took upon himself to lecture me just now. Of the consequences to Charley's vulnerable and boyish heart ; though he did put it upon me and of what the world might say."

"How grievously you must try your husband !" exclaimed Grace.

"He's used to it."

"You provoking woman ! You'll never go to heaven, I should say, if only for your treatment of him. Adela, you made your vows before Heaven to love and honour him : how do you fulfil them ?"

"I heard the other day you had turned Methodist ; Bessy Cust came in and said it. I am sorry I contradicted it," cried the provoking Adela.

"You cannot set the world at defiance."

"I don't mean to. As to Charley dancing attendance on me, or kissing my hand—what harm is there in it ?"

"That may be according to one's own notion of 'harm.' Even the most trifling approach to flirting is entirely unseemly in a married woman."

"Are you quite a competent judge—not being married yourself?" rejoined Adela. "See here, Grace—if you never flirt worse with anyone than Charley flirts with me, you won't hurt."

"I am afraid he has learnt to *love* you, Adela."

"The more silly, he, for his pains. Why, I am oceans of years older than Charley is. He ought to think of me as his grandmother."

"*Can't* you be serious, child ? I want you to see the thing in its proper—or, rather, improper—light. When it comes to a man, other than your husband, kissing you, it is time ——"

"Who said Charley kissed me ?" retorted Adela, in a blaze of anger. "He has never done such a thing—never dared to attempt it. I said he kissed my hand sometimes—and then it has generally had a glove upon it."

"Well, well, whatever the nonsense may be, you must give it up, Adela. There can be no objection on your part to do so, as you say you do not care for Charles Cleveland."

"Incorrect, Lady Grace. I do care for him ; I enjoy his friendship amazingly. What I said was, that I did not love him. That would be too absurd."

"Call it flirtation, don't call it friendship," wrathfully retorted Grace. "And he must be as devoid of brains as a calf, to attach

himself to you, if he has done it. I hope nothing of this will reach the ears of Mary or of his father. They would not believe him capable of such folly. From this hour, Adela, you must give it up."

"Just what Mr. Grubb has been good enough to tell me; but 'must' is a word I do not understand," lightly rejoined Adela. "Neither you nor he will make me break off my flirtation with Charles Cleveland. I shall go into it all the more to spite you."

"If I were Mr. Grubb I should beat you, Adela."

"If!" laughingly echoed Lady Adela. "If you were Mr. Grubb, you would do as he does. Why, Gracie, girl, he loves me passionately still, for all his assumed indifference. Do you think there are never moments when he betrays it? He is jealous of Charley; that's what he is, in spite of his dignified denial—and oh, the fun it is to me to have made him so!"

"Adela," said Grace sadly, "does it never occur to you that this behaviour may tire your husband out?—that his love and his patience may give way at last?"

"I wish they would!" cried the provoking girl, little seeing, or caring, in her reckless humour, what the wish might imply. "I wish he would go his way and let me go mine, and give me hundreds of thousands a year for my own share. He should have the dull rooms in the house and I the bright ones, and we would only meet at dinner on state occasions, when the world and his wife came to us."

Lady Grace felt downright angry. She wondered whether Adela spoke in her heart's true sincerity.

"There's no fear of it, Gracie: don't look at me like that. My husband would no more part company with me, whatsoever I might do, than he would part with his soul. He loves me too well."

"It is a positive disgrace to have one's married sister's name coupled with a flirtation," grumbled Grace: for the Lady Acorn, whatever might be her failings as to tongue and temper, had brought her daughters up in the purest and best of notions. "That reverend man, Dr. Short—I cannot think how it came to *his* ears—hinted at it to-day in talking with mamma when they met at the picture galleries. He ——"

"There it is!" shouted Adela, in glee; "the murder's out! So it is you who have been putting mamma up to complain to Mr. Grubb! You are setting your cap at that sanctimonious Dr. Short, and you fear he won't see it if you have got a naughty sister given to flirting. Oh, Gracie!"

"You are wrong; you know you are wrong. How frivolous you are, Adela! Dr. Short is going to be married to Miss Greatlands."

"Well, there's something of the sort in the wind, I know. If it's not the Reverend Dr. Short, it's the Reverend Dr. Long; so don't shake your head at me, Gracie."

Dancing across the room, Adela rang the bell. "My carriage," she said to the servant.

"It has been waiting some time, my lady."

"Where are you going?" asked Grace, surprised.

"To Lady Sanely's."

"To Lady Sanely's," echoed the elder sister. Then, after a pause, "Your husband did not know you were going there?"

"Do you suppose I tell him of my engagements? What next, I wonder?"

"Oh, Adela!" uttered Lady Grace, rising from her seat—and there was a piercing sound of grief in her tone, deeper than any which had characterised it throughout the interview—"do not say you are going *there*! Another rumour is rife about you; worse than that half-nonsensical one about Charles Cleveland; one likely to have a far graver effect on your welfare and happiness."

"I—I do not understand," repeated Adela; but her tone, in spite of its display of haughtiness, betrayed that she did understand, and it struck terror to the heart of her sister. "I think you are all beside yourselves to day!"

Grace, greatly agitated, clasped the other's arm as she was turning away. "It is said, Adela—I have heard it, and papa has confirmed it—it is rumoured that you have become addicted to a—a—dangerous vice. Oh, forgive me, Adela! Is it so? You shall not go until you have answered me."

The rich colour in Lady Adela's cheeks had faded to paleness; her eyes drooped; she could not look her sister in the face. From this, her manner of receiving the accusation, it might be seen how much more real was this trouble, than the half-nonsensical one, as Grace had called it, connected with Charles Cleveland.

"Vice!" she vaguely repeated.

"That of gaming," spoke Grace, her own voice unsteady in its deep emotion. "That you play deeply, night by night, at Lady Sanely's."

"What strong words you use!" gasped Adela, resentfully. "Vice! Just because I may take a hand at cards now and then!"

"Oh, my poor sister, my dear sister, you do not know what it may lead to!" pleaded Grace. "You shall not go forth to Lady Sanely's this night—do not! do not! Break through this dreadful chain at once—before it be too late."

Angry at hearing this amusement of hers had become known at home, vexed and embarrassed at being pressed, almost by force, to stay away from its fascinations, Adela flung her sister's arm from her and moved forward with an impatient gesture of passion. They were near a table, and her own hand, or that of Grace, neither well knew which, caught in a beautiful inkstand, and turned it over. The ink was scattered on the light carpet; an ugly, dark blotch.

What cared Adela? If the costly carpet was spoiled, *his* money might purchase another. She moved on to her dressing-room, caused her maid, waiting there, to envelop her in her evening mantle, and then swept down to her carriage.

That Lady Adela did not care for Charles Cleveland was perfectly true. She would have laughed at the very idea; she regarded him but as a pleasant-mannered boy: nevertheless, partly to while away the time, which sometimes hung heavily on her hands, partly because she hoped it would vex her husband, whom she but lived to annoy, she had plunged into the flirtation.

It was something more on Charley's part. For, while Adela cared not for him, beyond the passing amusement of the moment, would not have given to him a regretful thought had he suddenly been removed from her sight for ever, he had grown to love her to idolatry. It is a strong expression, but in this case justifiable. Almost as the sun is to the world, bringing to it light and heat, life to flowers, perfection to the corn, so had Lady Adela become to him. In her presence he could alone be said to live; his heart then was at rest, feeding on its own fulness of happiness, and there he could thankfully have lived and died, and never asked for change: when obliged to be absent from her, a miserable void was his, a feverish yearning for the hour that should bring him to her again. Surely this was most reprehensible on his part—to have become attached, in this senseless manner, to a married woman! Reprehensible? Hear what one says of another love; he who knew so much about love himself—Lord Byron:

"Why did she love him? Curious fool, be still:
Is human love the growth of human will?"

Could the fault have lain with Lady Adela? Most undoubtedly. She, not casting a thought to the effect it might have upon his heart, and secure in her own supreme indifference, purposely threw out the bait of her beauty and her manifold attractions, and so led him on to love—a love as true and impassioned as was ever felt by man. What did he promise himself by it?—what did he think could come of it? Nothing. He was not capable of cherishing towards her a dishonourable thought, he had never addressed to her a disloyal word. It was not in the nature of Charles Cleveland to do anything of the kind; he was single-minded, single-hearted, chivalrously honourable. He thought of her as being all that was good and beautiful: to him she seemed to be without fault, sweet and pure as an angel. To conceal his deep love for her was beyond his power; eye, tone, manner, tacitly and unconsciously betrayed it. And Lady Adela, to give her her due, did not encourage him to more.

And so, while poor Charley was living on in his fool's paradise, wishing for nothing, looking for nothing, beyond the exquisite sense of bliss her daily presence brought him, supremely content could he have lived on it for ever, Lady Adela already found the affair was growing rather monotonous. The chances were that had her husband and Grace not spoken to her, she would very speedily have thrown off Charley and his allegiance. Adela had no special pursuit whence to draw daily satisfaction. No home (the French would better express

it by the word *ménage*) to keep up and contrive for; the hand of wealth was at work, and all was provided for her to satiety; she had no children to train and love; she had no husband whom it was a delight to her to please and cherish: worse than all, she had (let us say *as yet*) no sense of responsibility to a higher Being, for time and talents wasted.

A woman cannot be truly happy (or a man either) unless she possesses some aim in life, some daily source of occupation, be it work, or be it pleasure, to contrive, and act, and live for. Without it she becomes a vapid, weary, discontented being, full of vague longings for she knows not what. One of two results is pretty sure to follow—mischief or misery. Lady Adela was too young and pretty to be miserable, therefore she turned to mischief.

Chance brought her an introduction to the Countess of Sanely, with whom the Chenevix family had no previous acquaintance, and who had a reputation for loving high card-playing and for encouraging it at her house: she and Adela grew intimate, and Adela was drawn into the disastrous pursuit. At first she liked it well enough; it was fascinating, it was new: and now, when perhaps she was beginning to be a little afraid, and would fain have retreated, she did not see her way clear to do so; for she owed money that she could not pay.

Lady Grace Chenevix, unceremoniously left alone in her sister's drawing-room, rang the bell. It was to tell them to attend to the ink. The carriage was not coming for her till eleven o'clock, and it was now but half-past ten. Hers were not very pleasant thoughts with which to get through the solitary half-hour. Mr. Grubb came in, and inquired for his wife. Grace said she had gone out.

"What, and left you alone! Where's she gone to?"

"To Lady Sanely's."

"Who are these Sanelys, Grace?" he inquired as he sat down. "Adela passes four or five nights a week there. The other evening I took up my hat to accompany her, and she would not have it. What kind of people are they?"

"Four or five nights a week," mechanically repeated Grace, passing over his question. "And at what time does she get home?"

"At all hours. Sometimes very late."

Grace sat communing with herself. Should she impart this matter of uneasiness to Mr. Grubb, or should she be silent, and let things take their chance? Which course would be more conducive to the interests of Adela? for she was indeed most anxious for her. She looked up at him, at his noble countenance, betraying commanding sense and intellect—surely to impart the truth to such a man was to make a confidant of one able to do for her sister all that could be done. Mr. Cleveland and Mary both said he ought to hear it without delay. And Grace's resolution was taken.

"Mr. Grubb," she said, her voice somewhat unsteady, "Adela is your wife and my sister; we have both, therefore, her true welfare at

heart. I have been deliberating whether I should speak to you upon a subject, which—which—gives me uneasiness, and I believe I ought to do so."

"Stay, Grace," he interrupted. "If it is—about—Cleveland, I would rather not enter upon it. Lady Acorn spoke to me to-day, and I have given a hint to Adela."

"Oh, no, it is not that. She goes on in a silly way with him, but there's no harm in it, only thoughtlessness. I am *sure* of it."

He nodded his head, in acquiescence, and began pacing the room.

"It is of her intimacy with Lady Sanely that I would speak ; these frequent visits there. Do you know what they say?"

"No," he replied, assuming great indifference, his thoughts apparently directed to placing his feet on one particular portion of the pattern of the carpet, and to nothing else.

"They say—they do say"—Grace faltered, hesitated : she hated to do this, and the question flashed across her, could she avoid it?

"Say what?" said Mr. Grubb carelessly.

"That play to an incredible extent is carried on there. And that Adela has been induced to join in it."

His assumed indifference was forgotten now, and the carpet might have been patternless for all he knew of it. He had stopped right under the chandelier, its flood of light illumining his countenance as he looked long and hard at Grace, as one in a maze.

Much that had been inexplicable in his wife's conduct for some little time past was rendered clear now. Her feverish restlessness on the evenings she was going to Lady Sanely's ; her coming home at all hours jaded, sick, out of spirits, yet unable to sleep ; her extraordinary demands for money, latterly to an extent which had puzzled and almost terrified him. But he had never yet refused it to her.

"It must be put a stop to somehow," said Grace.

"It must," he answered, resuming his walk, and drawing a deep breath. "What's all this wet on the carpet?"

"An accident this evening. Some ink was thrown down. My fault, I believe. At any cost, any sacrifice," continued Lady Grace. "If the habit should get hold of Adela, there is nothing but unhappiness before her—perhaps ruin."

"Any cost, any sacrifice, that I can make, shall be made," repeated Mr. Grubb. "But Adela will listen to no remonstrance from me. You know that, Grace."

"You must—stop the supplies," suggested Grace, dropping her voice to a confidential whisper. "Has she had much of late?"

"Yes."

"More than her allowance ? Perhaps not, as that is so liberal."

"Her allowance !" half laughed her husband, not a happy laugh. "It has been, to what she has drawn of me, as a silver coin in a purse of gold."

Grace clasped her hands. "And you let her have it! Did you suspect nothing?"

"Not of this nature. I suspected that she might be buying costly things—after the reckless fashion of Selina Dalrymple. Or else that—forgive me, Grace, I would rather not say more."

"Nay," said Grace, rising to put her hand on his arm and meeting his earnest glance, "let there be entire confidence between us; keep nothing back."

"Well, Grace, I fancied she might be lending it to your mother."

"No, no; my mother has not borrowed from her lately. Oh, how can we save her! This is an insinuating vice that gains upon its votaries, they say, like the eating of opium."

"Your carriage, my lady," interrupted a servant, entering the room. And Grace caught up her mantle.

"Must you go, Grace? It is scarcely eleven."

"Yes. If mamma does not have the carriage to the minute, she won't cease scolding for days, and it must take me home first. Dear Mr. Grubb, turn this over in your mind," she whispered, "and see what you can do. Use your influence with her, and be firm."

"My influence, did you say?" And there was a touch of sarcasm in his tone, mingled with a grief painful to hear. "What has my influence with her ever been, Grace?"

"I know, I know," she cried, wringing his hand, and turning from him towards the stairs, that he might not see the tears gathering in her eyes. Tears of sympathy with his wrongs, and partly, perhaps, of regret: for she was thinking of that curious misapprehension, years ago, when she had been led to believe that it was herself who was his chosen bride. "I would not have treated him so," her heart murmured; "I would have made his life a happy one, as he deserves it should be."

He gained upon her fast steps; and, drawing her arm within his, led her down-stairs, and placed her in the carriage.

"Dear Mr. Grubb," she whispered, as he clasped her hands, "do not let what I have been obliged to say render you harsh with poor Adela. Different days may be in store for you both; she may yet be the mother of your children, when happiness in each other would surely follow. Do not be unkind to her."

"Unkind to Adela! No, Grace. Separation, rather than unkindness."

"Separation!" gasped Grace, the ominous word affrighting her.

"I have thought sometimes that it may come to it. A man cannot patiently endure contumely for ever, Grace."

He withdrew his hand from hers, and turned back into his desolate home. Grace sank back in the carriage.

"God keep him! God comfort him, and help him to bear!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

A PRESENT OF COFFEE.

It was two o'clock when Lady Adela returned home. She ran lightly upstairs and into the drawing-room, throwing off her mantle as she came in. A tray of refreshments stood on a side-table.

Mr. Grubb rose from his chair. "It is very late, Adela."

"Late! Not at all. I wish to *goodness* you'd not sit up for me!

She went up to the table and stood looking at the decanters, as if deliberating what she should take, murmuring something about being "frightfully thirsty."

"What shall I give you?" he asked.

"Nothing," was the ungracious answer, most ungraciously spoken. And she poured out a tumbler of weak sherry-and-water, and drank it; a second, and drank that also. Then, without taking any notice of him, she went up to her chamber. Anything more pointedly, stingingly contemptuous than her behaviour to her husband, now, and for some time past, has never been exhibited by mortal woman.

Mr. Grubb rang for the man to put out the wax-lights, and went up in his turn. There was no sleep for him that night, whatever there might have been for her. He knew not how to act, how to arrest this new pursuit of hers; he scarcely knew even how to open the matter to her. She appeared to be asleep when he rose in the morning and passed into his dressing-room. She, herself, soon afforded him the opportunity.

He was seated at his solitary breakfast, a meal his wife rarely condescended to take with him, when her maid entered, bringing a message from her lady—that she wished to see him before he left for the City. Master Charley Cleveland, usually his breakfast companion, had not made his appearance at home since the previous night.

"Is your lady up, Davvy?"

"Oh dear yes, sir, and at breakfast in her dressing-room."

He went up to it. How very lovely she looked, sitting there at her coffee, in her embroidered white dress and its pink ribbons, and the delicate lace cap shading her sweet features. She had risen thus early to get money from him; he knew that, before she asked for it.

"You wished to see me, Lady Adela."

"I want some money," she said, in a light, flippant kind of tone, as if it were the sole purpose of Mr. Grubb's existence to supply her demands for it.

"Impossible," he rejoined. "You had two hundred pounds from me the day before yesterday."

"I must have two hundred more this morning. I want it."

"What is it that you are doing with all this money? It has much puzzled me."

"Oh—making a purse for myself," she answered, saucily.

"You can trust me to do that for you. I cannot continue to supply you, Adela."

"But I must have it," she retorted, raising her voice and speaking as though he were the very dirt under her feet. "I will have it."

"No," he replied calmly, but with firm resolution in his tone. "I shall give you no more until your allowance is due."

She looked up, quite a furious expression on her lovely face. "Not give it me! Why, what do you suppose I married you for?"

"Adela!" came his reproof, almost whispered.

"I would not have taken you but for your money; you know that. They promised me at home that I should have unlimited command of it; and I will."

"You have had unlimited command," he observed, and there was no irritation suffered to appear in his tone, whatever may have been his inward pain. "It is for your own sake I must discontinue to supply it."

"You are intelligible!" was her scornful rejoinder: for, in good truth, this refusal was making havoc of her temper.

"All that you can need in every way shall be yours, Adela. Purchase what you like, order what you like; I will pay the bills without a murmur. *But I will not give you money to waste, as you have latterly wasted it, at Lady Sanely's.*"

She rose from her seat, pale with anger. "First Charles Cleveland, then Lady Sanely: what else am I to be lectured upon? How dare you presume to interfere with my pursuits?"

"I should ill be fulfilling my duty to you, or my love either, Adela, what is left of it, if I did not interfere."

"I will not listen, Mr. Grubb: if you attempt to preach to me, as you did last night, I will run away. Sit down and write me a cheque for the money."

"There is no necessity for me to repeat my refusal, Adela. Until I have reason to believe that this new liking for PLAY has left you, you should draw my blood from me, sooner than money to pursue it. But remember," he impressively added, "that I say this in all kindness."

She looked at him, her delicate throat working, her breath growing short with passion.

"Will you give me the cheque?"

"I will not. Anything more, Adela, for I am late?"

There was no answer in words, but she suddenly raised the cup, which chanced to be in her hand, and was half full of coffee, and flung it at him. It struck him on the chin, the coffee falling upon his clothes.

It was a moment of embarrassment for them both. He looked steadfastly at her, with a calm, despairing sorrow, and then quitted the room. While Lady Adela, her senses returning, sank back in her chair; and, in the reaction of her inexcusable passion, sobbed aloud.

It was quite a violent fit of sobbing: and she smothered her head

up, that he should not hear. She did feel ashamed of herself, felt even a little honest shame at her general treatment of him. As her sobs subsided, she heard him in his dressing-room, changing his things, and she wished she had not done it. But she *must* have the money; that, and more; without it, she should be in a frightful dilemma, and might have her name posted up as a card-playing defaulter in the drawing-rooms of society. So she determined to have another battle for it with her husband, and she dried the tears on her fair young face, and opened his dressing-room door quite humbly, so to say, and went into it.

It was empty. Mr. Grubb's movements had been rapid, and he was already gone. He had put out of sight the stained things taken off, removed all traces of them. Was she not sensible even of this? Did she not know that he was thus cautious for her own sake—that no scandal might be given to the tongues of the servants? Not she. With his disappearance, and the consequent failure of her hope, all her resentment was returning. Her foot kicked against something on the floor, and she stooped to pick it up. It was her husband's cheque-book, which he must have unconsciously dropped when transferring things from one pocket to another.

Was a demon just then at Lady Adela's side?—what else could have impelled her?—what else whispered to her of a way to supply the money she wanted? Once only a momentary hesitation crossed her; but she drove it away, and carried the cheques to her writing table, and *used one of them*.

She drew it for five hundred pounds, a heavy sum, and she boldly signed it "Grubb and Howard." For it happened to be the cheque-book of the firm, not of her husband's private account. She was clever at drawing, clever at imitating styles of writing—not that she had ever turned her talent to its present use, or thought so to turn it—and the signature, when finished, looked very like her husband's own. Then she carried back the cheque-book, and laid it on the floor where she found it.

Some time after all this was accomplished, she was passing downstairs, deliberating upon whether she could dare to go to the bank herself to get the cheque cashed, when Charles Cleveland came in, and bounded up the stairs.

"Where did Mr. Grubb breakfast this morning?" he enquired, apparently in a desperate hurry, as they shook hands, and turned into one of the sitting-rooms, Charley devouring her with his eyes all the time. Little blame to him, either, for she was looking most lovely: the excitement, arising from what she had done, glowing in her cheeks like a sweet blush-rose.

"What a question! He breakfasted at home."

"Yes, yes, dear Lady Adela. I meant in which room." For Mr. Grubb sometimes breakfasted in the regular breakfast-room, and sometimes in his library.

"I really don't know, and don't care," returned Adela, connecting the question somehow, in her own mind, with the present of coffee he had received. "His breakfasting is a matter of indifference to me. And pray, Mr. Charley, where did *you* breakfast this morning?—and what became of you last night? Have you been making a night of it with the owls and the bats?"

"I went to my brother's. Harry had some fellows with him, and we, as you express it, dear Lady Adela, made a night of it. That is, we broke up so late that I would not disturb your house by returning here; Harry gave me a sofa, and I went direct from him to Leadenhall Street this morning."

"And what have you come back for?"

"For Mr. Grubb's cheque-book. He has missed it, and thinks he must have left it on the breakfast-table."

"Charley," she said, "I was just wanting you. *Will* you do me a favour?"

"I will do everything you wish," he answered, his tones literally trembling with tenderness.

"I want you to go to the bank in Lombard Street, and get me a cheque cashed. Mr. Grubb gave it me this morning, and I am in a hurry for the money, for I expect people here every minute with some accounts. It is not crossed. Take a cab and go at once."

"I will. I can leave the cheque-book in Leadenhall Street first."

"No, you must not wait to find the cheque-book. I will look for it while you are gone. You will not be many minutes, I am sure, and I tell you I am all impatience."

Charley Cleveland hesitated. "I scarcely know what to say," he replied, dubiously, to this. "Mr. Grubb is waiting for the cheque-book. This is Saturday, you know."

"What if it is?"

"We are always so busy on Saturdays."

"Very well, Charles," she returned, in a hurt, resentful tone. "If you like Mr. Grubb better than you do me, you will oblige him first. You would be there and back in no time."

"Dearest Lady Adela! Like Mr. Grubb better than—— Well, I will do it, though I daresay I shall get into a row. Have the cheque-book ready, that I may not lose a moment when I get back." And Adela nodded assent.

"A confounded row, too," he muttered to himself, as he tore down the stairs, and into the cab; "but I will go through a thunder-cloud full of rows, for *her*." Charley gave a concise word to the driver, and away dashed the cab towards Lombard Street, at a pace which terrified the road generally, and greatly astonished the apple-stalls.

He was back in an incredibly short space of time, and paid the notes over to her. "Have you found the cheque-book?" he asked.

"I declare I never thought about it," was Lady Adela's reply.

"But he breakfasted in the library, I hear. Perhaps you will find it there."

He rushed down to the library. And there, on the table, was the missing cheque-book. Oh, wary Lady Adela!

She followed him into the room. "Charley," she whispered, "don't say you have been out for me—no need to say you have seen me. The fact is, that staid husband of mine got a grumbling fit upon him last night, and accused me of talking and laughing too much with the world in general and Mr. Charles Cleveland in particular. If they find fault with you for loitering, say you were detained on some matter of your own."

He nodded in the affirmative. But a red vermillion was stealing over his face, dyeing it to the very roots of his hair, and his heart's pulses were rising high. For surely in that last speech she meant to imply that she *loved* him. And Master Charles felt his brain turn round as it had never turned before, and he bent that flushed face down upon her hand, and left on it an impassioned, though very respectful kiss, by way of adieu.

"What a young goose he is!" thought Adela.

Very ill at ease, that day, was the Lady Adela. Reckless though she might be as to her husband's good opinion, implicitly secure though she felt that he would hush up the matter and shield her from consequences, she could not help being dissatisfied with what she had done. Suppose *exposure* came?—she would not like *that*. She had written Mr. Howard's name, as well as her husband's! She lost herself in a reverie, her mind running from one ugly point to another. Try as she would, she could not drive the thoughts away, and by the afternoon she had become seriously uneasy. Was such a case ever known as that of a wife being brought to trial for—"Whatever possesses me to dwell upon such things?" she mentally queried, starting up in anger with herself. "Rather order the carriage and go and pay my last night's losses."

From Lady Sanely's she went to her mother's, intending to stay and dine there. Somehow she was already beginning to shrink from meeting her husband's face. However, she found they were all engaged to dine at Colonel Hope's, including her sister Mary. So Adela had to return home: but she took care not to do it until close upon the dinner hour.

Mr. Grubb and Charles Cleveland were both at table. Neither of them alluded to the unpleasant topic uppermost in her mind, so she concluded that as yet nothing had come out. Mr. Grubb was very silent—the result no doubt of the coffee in the morning.

"I am going down to Netherleigh to-morrow morning, sir, to see my father," observed Charles. "He has written to ask me. Could you allow me to remain for Monday also? Harry means to run down for an hour that day, to say good-bye."

"Monday?" considered Mr. Grubb. "Yes, I suppose you can.

There's nothing particular that you will be required for on Monday, that I know of. You may stay."

"Thank you, sir."

"When does your brother leave?"

"I think on Tuesday morning."

Accordingly, on the following morning, Sunday, Charley left the house to go to Netherleigh. Mr. Grubb went to church, as usual; Adela made an excuse—said her head ached. When he returned home at one o'clock, he found she had gone to her mother's; and, without saying to him with your leave, or by your leave, without, in fact, giving him any intimation whatever, she remained at Chenevix House for the rest of the day.

On the Monday, Mr. Grubb went to business at the customary hour, but returned early in the afternoon to attend some public meeting in Westminster, connected with politics. Influential people—Conservatives: who were called Tories then—had for some time past been soliciting him to go into Parliament; he had not quite made up his mind yet whether he would, or not.

He and his wife dined alone. Lord and Lady Kingdon, with whom they were intimate, were to have dined with them; but only a few minutes before the time of sitting down, a note came to say they had received ill news of one of their children, who was at school at Twickenham, and had to hasten thither. Adela was tryingly cross and contrary at table: she had not wished to be alone with her husband, lest he should have found out what she had done, and begin upon it. So, after the first few minutes, the meal proceeded nearly in silence. She did not fear the explosion quite as much as she did at first: each hour as it went on smoothly, helped to make her uneasiness less.

But she was not to escape long. Just as the servants were quitting the room, leaving the wine on the table, one of them came back again.

"Mr. Howard has called, sir. He says he would not disturb you at this hour, but he must see you on a matter of pressing business."

"Pressing business!" echoed Mr. Grubb. "Show Mr. Howard in. A chair, Richard, and glasses."

The stiff and stern old man entered, bowing to Lady Adela. His iron-grey hair looked greyer than usual, and his black coat rusty. Rusty coats are worn by more than one millionaire.

"Why, Howard, this is quite an event for you! Why did you not come in time for dinner? Sit down. Anything new? Anything happened?"

"Why, yes," replied Mr. Howard, who was a slow-speaking man, giving one the idea that the bump of caution must be large on his head. "Thank you, port."

"What is it?" enquired the senior partner.

"I will enter upon the matter presently," replied James Howard, deliberately sipping his wine. By which answer Mr. Grubb of course understood that he would only speak when they were alone.

Lady Adela swallowed her strawberries and left her seat so quickly that Mr. Grubb could hardly get to the door in time to open it, and she went up to the drawing-room. She felt sure, as sure as though she could read his very thoughts, that "that horrid Howard" had come about the cheque. She did not care so much that her husband should find it out; he might do his best and his worst, and the worst from him she did not dread greatly; but that that old ogre should know it, perhaps take steps—oh, that was quite another thing. *Could* he take steps?—would the law justify it? Adela did not know; but she began to give the reins to her imagination, and cowered in terror.

As she thus sat, her ears painfully alive to every sound, a cab rattled into the square, and stopped at the door. It brought Charles Cleveland. Charley had just come up from Netherleigh; the train was late, and he was in a desperate hurry to get into his dress-clothes, to attend a "spread"—it was what Charley called it—given by his brother. Adela ran out, and arrested him as he was making for his room, three stairs at a time.

"Charley, I want to speak to you—just for a moment. What mortal haste you are in!"

In haste he was: but to be pressed thus into the drawing-room by her, to meet her again after this temporary absence, was to him as light breaking in upon darkness. "Oh Charles," she added, giving him both her hands in agitation, "surely some good fairy sent you! I am in deep distress."

"Can I soothe it?" he asked, wondering at her emotion, and retaining her hands in his. "Can I do anything for you?"

"I am in sore need of a friend—to—to shelter me," she continued. "Great, desperate need!"

"Can I be that friend? Suffer me if you can. *Suffer* me to be, Lady Adela. Dear! dear! what can have happened?"

"But it may bring danger upon you, difficulty, even disgrace. I believe I ought not to ask it of you."

"Danger and difficulty would be welcome, borne for you," returned Charley in his loyalty. "Believe that, Lady Adela."

He could not imagine what was amiss, and he caught somewhat of her agitation. That she was in real trouble, nay, in terror, was all too plain. For a moment the thought occurred—was Mr. Grubb angry with her on his account? Oh, what a privilege it appeared to him, foolish but honest-hearted fellow, to be asked to shield her!

"I will trust you," she cried, her emotion increasing. "That cheque—but oh, Charles, do not you think ill of me! It was done in a moment of irritation."

"Say on, dear Lady Adela."

"That cheque—he did not give it me. I had asked him for money, and he refused. I wanted it badly; and I was angry with him: *so I drew the cheque.*"

Charley felt all at sea, not comprehending in the least. She saw it:

and was forced to go on with her painful explanation. The colour was coming and going in her cheek ; now white as a lily, now rose-red.

"That cheque you cashed for me on Saturday morning, Charley. Mr. Grubb did not draw it. Mr. Howard's name was signed as well as his ; and—and he is with my husband in the dining-room, and I am frightened to death."

There was a momentary pause. Charley understood now, and saw all the *difficulty* of the matter, as she had lightly called it. But his honest love for her was working strongly in his heart, and he formed a hasty, chivalrous resolve to shield her if he could. Had she not appealed to him ?

"I want you not to say that it was from me you had the cheque, Charley."

"I never will say it. Rely upon me."

"They cannot *do* anything to me, I suppose ; or to anyone else," she went on. "It is the exposure that would drive me wild. I could not bear that even that old Howard should know it was I. Oh, Charles, what can be done ?"

"Be at ease, Lady Adela. You shall never repent your confidence. Not a breath of suspicion shall come near you. I will shield you ; I am proud to do it ; shield you, if need be, with my life. You little know how valueless that life would be without your society, dear Lady Adela."

"Now Charles, hold your tongue. You must not take to say such things to me. They are not right—and are all nonsense besides. What would Mr. Grubb think ?"

"Forgive me," murmured Charley, all repentance. "I did not mean to say aught that was disloyal to him or to you, Lady Adela. I could not be capable of it, now, or ever. And I will keep my word—to shield you through this trouble. I repeat it. I swear it."

He wrung her hand in token of good faith, and escaped to keep his engagement. She sat down, somewhat reassured, but not at all easy in her conscience. The world just now seemed rather hard to the Lady Adela.

(To be continued.)

A PEEP AT MELBOURNE IN 1881.

OF course there are very few Englishmen nowadays who retain that old and exploded idea that any Australian town is but a collection of shanties, situated in a remote corner of the world, only fitted for producing unknown quantities of gold to enrich the shoals of ne'er-do-wells who, among others, once went out—nay, even now emigrate in hundreds every year—to that golden land: that land of blighted hopes in some cases, of honest toil and industry rewarded in others.

Modern Melbourne—if such a term can be applied to a city barely fifty years old—is one of the cleanest, as it certainly is one of the best laid-out cities in the world. With a rapidly increasing population, at present estimated at 190,000, it bids fair in years to come to attain nearly the proportions of New York. The first peculiarity which strikes a stranger is the absence of beer-shops, gin-palaces, or taverns. It must not be inferred from this that the city is conducted on strictly teetotal principles; far from it. The simple solution is, that the veriest little beer-shop is called in Melbourne, and, indeed, throughout Australia, an *hotel*, and there are dozens of them, though not more, perhaps, than will be found in an English city of the same size; and it must be confessed that more intoxication is seen in one night among the newly-arrived passengers from a large vessel from London, than in a week among the ordinary population of the city.

From the shipping advertisements it might be imagined that Melbourne is actually by the sea; but such is not the case. All ships from England land their passengers and cargo either at Williamstown or Sandridge, both situated in Hobson's Bay, respectively five and two-and-a-half miles from the city: the one noted for its dulness, the other for its dust. Sandridge, however, is the most convenient port of the two, as it has a station, with a good service of trains close to the landing or railway pier; and omnibuses and buggies, a sort of light covered waggon to seat five, ply continuously between it and all parts of Melbourne.

Whilst alluding to the railways it may not be out of place to say that there are only two classes of carriages, first and second, and that the fares, though reasonable on the whole, vary much, in accordance with the line you patronise.

If the visitor to Melbourne cares for boating, he can indulge his proclivities to the utmost on the river Yarra, which slowly meanders through the city from east to west, ultimately falling into Hobson's Bay midway between Williamstown and Sandridge. This river does not supply the Melbournites with water for drinking purposes; for this last, by a clever piece of engineering, is brought from springs at

Yan-Yean, seventeen miles away, in a state of absolute purity: thus offering a great contrast to certain English water companies, who are not particular as to the water they provide—their chief consideration being that all rates shall be paid with punctuality, and that the so-called water shall contain as much solid vegetable or animal matter as is consistent with its flowing through the pipes laid down for it.

But to return to Melbourne. Another peculiarity is the drainage system. It is all on the surface; and the street gutters, into which a good deal of the surplus water falls, or rather runs, fed by pipes just underneath the pavement, look, especially after a heavy rainfall, like dissipated brooks hurrying, like other vagrants, off to sea.

In the larger streets, these gutters are crossed by a small, sideless bridge from the pavement well into the road, which is very necessary, seeing that at times, after a heavy, semi-tropical rainfall, the streets are quite impassable.

The number of dining-rooms and restaurants in Melbourne is prodigious, considering the size of the place. In Bourke Street, which may be said to correspond with the Strand in London, though a good deal longer and about double the width, the dining-rooms may be seen in their greatest variety. In most of them, as in nearly all Australian towns, you can get a good dinner, fairly well served—soup, meat, pudding, bread, cup of tea or coffee, and attendance—for sixpence. Fish, which is scarce and bad, and poultry, are, of course, very much dearer. But at any first-class hotel a good dinner, served in first-rate style, after the manner of the London high-class table-d'hôte, can be had for a couple of shillings, including attendance, but not, of course, ale or wine.

The cheapness of meat is probably too well known to need recapitulation, but it may interest a few to hear that on Saturday night the whole side of sheep can be bought for one-and-sixpence or one-and-eightpence; that the average price of mutton per pound throughout the year is twopence-halfpenny, and beef a penny dearer.

Fruit is both good and cheap, grapes and apples more especially, while the greater part of the trade in vegetables is in the hands of the industrious Chinese, whose quarter of the city is Little Bourke Street. In this street may be found genuine Chinese tea merchants, on whose doors and windows quaint and mysterious devices are painted, the dragon figuring largely among them; opium dens, and also a joss house, or temple, dedicated to Buddha. In fact, it is, in miniature, a perfect reflex of the streets of Peking or Canton.

The Australians, as is well known, have shown their fondness for the old country, as they call England, by naming many of their towns and cities after places dear to them at home. Thus, in or adjoining Melbourne, we have Richmond, Camberwell, Kensington, Brighton, and many other familiar names too numerous to mention. The last of these, and also St. Kilda, are fashionable suburban watering-places, each with a good pier and parade. But the stranger, or "new

chum," fresh from England, misses one thing, and that is bathing-machines. Woe be to the venturesome swimmer who, in defiance of all advice, strikes out from the shore, for he is as likely as not to get an arm or a leg snatched off by a hungry shark. These dangerous fish swarm in Hobson's Bay, and, indeed, on nearly all the coast of Australia, so that to bathe in the open sea is a very venturesome, not to say dangerous pastime. It is to make up for this great want that baths have been formed at several places, consisting of a piece of water fenced in with strong wire, connected with the beach by a pier, on which are dressing-rooms, &c., so that people can bathe at their ease without any fear of encountering the "tiger" of the seas when they are least prepared for him.

The two leading thoroughfares in Melbourne are Collins Street and Bourke Street. The former is for the most part occupied by crowds of business and professional men, engaged in the various banks, offices, and the Exchange. The magnificent blocks of buildings which adorn this handsome street from end to end prove conclusively that the Australians can hold their own with any nation as regards that much neglected art, street architecture. But from about four to six, the crowds on the broad pavement undergo an extraordinary change in their composition; for now, in front of a magnificent row of shops, among which are the finest linen-drappers and milliners in the city, may be seen all the beauty and fashion of Melbourne and its far-stretching suburbs, the *crème de la crème* of Victorian fashionable life. Collins Street puts off its business aspect, and, as if by magic, is transformed into the colonial Rotten Row. If any English lady doubts that the women of Victoria can look well and dress fashionably, let her go to Melbourne, wait until the above-mentioned hour, and see the mothers and daughters of the "upper ten" doing—to use the colonial phrase—"the block." By six the promenaders are gone, there is a scamper and rush of city men hurrying off to catch their trains or omnibuses, and by eight, Collins Street, which is one third broader than the Broadway of New York, is comparatively speaking deserted.

Not so its companion street, Bourke Street. In that busy thoroughfare the stream of life, which has been flowing all day long, now becomes busier than ever as night draws on. Theatres, concert-halls, waxworks, shooting galleries, all open their doors to receive large numbers of the seething crowd, ever eager to be amused; for Melbourne is wonderfully like New York in its love for amusements, as also it is for the possession of that peculiar quality known to the Americans as "go-aheadism." It is safe to say that every place of amusement in Melbourne is to be found only in Bourke Street. One of the theatres, the Royal, is peculiar as having for its manager a veteran actor, Mr. George Coppin, who is also an M.P.!

For those who do not care for theatrical amusements there is, among other entertainments, the waxworks to go to. This is not quite up to the standard of Madame Tussaud's famous exhibition in

Baker Street; but at the same time it is very entertaining to those who are fond of riddles. The inquiring "new chum" may stand for hours guessing wildly as to whom certain effigies represent. After which, if his strength will permit, he can either buy a catalogue or take a cab from the door to a large stone building, standing in its own grounds, about a mile and a half distant, styled by the vulgar and uncouth, The Yarra Bend Lunatic Asylum.

In Russell Street there is a handsome building known as the Temperance Hall and Reading Room, also Library. The building belongs to the Melbourne Temperance Society, a body who have done, and are doing, an immense amount of sterling good work, which in time no doubt will bring forth good fruit. The reading-room, in which are all the colonial dailies and weeklies, contains a first-rate library, the books from which, in common with the papers, may be freely read by any person who pays a penny at the door.

As regards public buildings, Melbourne will rank quite as high as a great many cities very much larger, wealthier, and older; but in church architecture the capital of Victoria certainly does not shine. To attempt to describe the Exhibition would take up far too much space. Suffice it to say that it is in a picturesque locality, known as Carlton Gardens, and bids fair, when finished, to completely throw in the shade its quondam rival in New South Wales.

It is wonderfully easy to find one's way about the city, all the streets being laid out at right angles.

The principal parks are Albert Park and Princes Park; the former containing a handsome edifice devoted to Her Majesty's representative in Victoria, and also the magnificent ground of the Melbourne Cricket Club. Princes Park, about two miles from the heart of the city, is chiefly remarkable for a small but select collection of wild animals and birds, and for its beautiful specimens of tropical vegetable life. It is situated on the Sydney Road, in days of yore a mere bush-track, but now a handsome macadamised highway, about four miles up which, behind a handsome row of plane trees, stands one of the largest penal establishments not only in the Australian colonies, but in the world. It is called Pentridge, a name well known and hated by every criminal in the colony. In it every trade is represented; bootmakers, tailors, hatters, printers, all are there. Many hundred men are actively engaged all day long; and a year or so back, several Melbourne tradesmen, beginning to feel adversely the result of this unequal competition, presented a memorial to the Chief Secretary, praying that the sale of articles made at Pentridge should be more restricted. Some alterations were accordingly made; but even now the place puts one forcibly in mind of a miniature manufacturing town, with its lofty shafts and chimneys. One look at the wretched dress and large straw hats of the convicts, not to mention the watchful sentinels armed with their deadly rifles, soon dispels the illusion, and brings the looker-on back to all the painful realities of

life's shady side. In this prison, dragging out a miserable existence, are several well-known bushrangers, notably Power, who not many years back made travelling as dangerous as Dick Turpin and his followers in the good old days of our ancestors to the wealthy citizens of London on Hounslow Heath.

Quitting this rather dreary theme, a word may be said about Flemington. This little place is about six miles from Melbourne, and is dear to all Australian lovers of sport by reason of its race-course, pronounced by all good judges to be unequalled as regards its position, for from any part of the ground the entire immense course can be seen by anyone, and the horses can be kept in view from the start to the finish.

The Melbourne Cup, which is to the Australians what our Derby is to us, always attracts an immense concourse of people from all parts of the Australian continent. The rough element, so prominent a feature at an English race meeting, is conspicuous by its absence, as the police look after them more strictly than they do here. That class of persons commonly called "roughs" in England are known throughout Australia as "larrikins," a term more expressive than euphonious. It is this class, as a rule, which gives so many subjects for police reports in the Melbourne newspapers. Melbourne journalism is very fair on the whole, though occasionally rather unequal. The principal daily papers are the "Argus" (the "Times" of Melbourne), the "Age," "Daily Telegraph," and "Herald." The first of these is a first-class paper in every way, containing thoroughly well-written articles, and all the latest European and Colonial news. The other papers call for no special mention, with the exception of the "Herald," a penny evening paper which is famous for circulating extraordinary rumours one evening and contradicting them the next. At the same time, however, it occupies a very high place among colonial newspapers, and the little failing above mentioned is not entirely unknown among certain of our English journals.

One word in conclusion as to the scenery of Melbourne. There is no use disguising it: Melbourne, that is the country round it, is not pretty, but there is one exception to prove the rule. Let the visitor to Melbourne make his way to a tiny village called Broadmeadows, nine miles away, and if the lovely scenery does not put him in mind of some of the sweetest spots in the dear old country so far away, he must be a man hard to please.

But now the curtain must fall; the busy city fades from our sight. To the writer, Australia, with its glorious sun and bright blue skies, is gone, never to return. All that remains to him of the great city under the glorious stars of the Southern Cross is a creature of imagination, a child of fancy, a memory of the past.

THE SHUT-UP HOUSES.

BY ISABELLA FYVIE MAYO, AUTHOR OF "THE OCCUPATIONS OF A RETIRED LIFE," "THE MYSTERY OF DR. HARDY'S MARRIAGE," &c.

IV.

"I WILL tell you my history," said Miss Turner, fixing a wistful gaze upon Mr. Duncan. "It will open flood-gates that have been long closed, and probe wounds that only death can heal; but there is something that compels me to open my heart to you. Strange as that will be, it is not more strange than the fact of your being in this room, where for years no intruder has set foot."

Mr. Duncan did not speak, but the sympathy he felt needed no form of words to declare itself.

"I was born in this very house," she went on, after a moment's pause, "and so was my sister Agatha, who died lately," and she named a date, which was thirty years back.

"When we were children we were the gayest of the gay. We had no mother, but our father indulged us in everything that was for our benefit. We had a carriage to drive in: we had excellent masters for the accomplishments that were taught in those days: we were taken to the hills and the sea for our health. We saw very little company, except gentlemen who used to come to see my father, apparently on business, and then stay and spend the evening. Very fine gentlemen they were. I've heard the highest titles in the land used in that room overhead, which was then the drawing-room. And they all paid great deference to my father and had many compliments for Agatha and me. And sometimes we noticed some of the younger ones seemed very sad and gloomy, and we used to be so sorry for them! But when we grew to be young women, the gentlemen were never asked to spend the evening in the drawing-room, and if by any chance one did so, my father required us to keep our own rooms in the higher stories of the house.

"It was in those days that old Hannah came to be our servant—not a house-servant, but a sort of personal attendant for Agatha and me. And very soon after that, somebody came courting me. I will own that it was he I thought of when your strange message was sent in to me. He was none of my father's fine gentlemen friends, but the pupil of an architect whom my father had employed on some of his property. My father was very angry about it, and it was then that Agatha and I first began to notice what solitary lives we had led, and how my father had withdrawn us from all kinds of society. It was not that my father objected to anything in my lover himself: he had made a great favourite of him even before I knew him, and while he

spoke harshly to me of our affection for each other, he owned how good and clever he was.

"Years afterwards, when I found out all the truth of our history, I fancied my father had meant to take us far away—perhaps to the Continent—and introduce us where nothing would be known of us, except that we were a rich man's daughters. He said something like this to me when wanting me to break off my engagement; but I was so full of my love, with all its joy and pain, that I did not pay much attention except my own resolution to be faithful to the end."

She paused again for a moment, and then went on.

"I never knew much of Paul's family. He had no nearer kin than a married sister, who lived in France. So there was nobody to take our part. But I would have gone away and married him then and there, only that his health broke down, and the doctor said his one chance of life was a long voyage and a change of climate. I would still have married him at once and gone with him, but we had no money of our own, and all we could do was to weep and part, translating the doctor's forlorn 'one chance' into a brighter 'certainty.' I deceived myself, sir—if we did not deceive ourselves sometimes, I don't think we could endure life at all—but this I know, when I stole out to the docks to watch him go aboard his ship, I knew I should never see him again in this world.

"Everything went on the same at home. Father made believe to forget everything, and was as kind to me as ever—even kinder. But one day, after breakfast, he kissed us both and went out, as was his wont, and he never, never came home again. No, never," she said, springing up like a girl, "never. It's sixty years ago since I last saw him that day, and I know no more what happened to him than we knew that first terrible night."

"O that has been a grievous trial," cried Mr. Duncan.

"You don't know what you're talking about," she said, with a sudden return to her quiet commonplace manner. "Nobody knows what that is till they've tried it. Ah," she exclaimed, looking up, "that explains to me how mystery makes one fancy dreadful things! I went through and through the house, feeling as if father was shut up somewhere just out of our hearing. And when, in the course of the inquiries which were set on foot, strangers came about the place, I used to wonder whether this one or that one had murdered him."

"Terrible!" muttered Mr. Duncan.

"And then it came out that he had left great wealth behind him," she went on; "and also that he had made it by money-lending and bitter extortions. In the newspaper articles that were written about his strange disappearance he was called all sorts of bad names—'old villain,' 'usurer,' and the like. And they were true. Only he was our father and had always been kind to us.

"There was worse to follow. It came out that our mother had not died when we were babies, as we had always been led to believe, but that she was divorced from our father for her own selfish wickedness, and had only died after we were grown up, and that we girls had known her name in the public prints as a shameful woman ! And, oh ! they made a ballad of it all, and sang it through the open streets. They sang it down here. We had to go into the back rooms not to hear it. And none of the neighbours sent them away," she added, with a vivid recollection of what had been the bitterest sting in that hour of humiliation—the sense of loneliness, the withdrawing of sympathy.

"I've heard one of your present neighbours speaking very kindly of you to-day," said Mr. Duncan.

"Ah, these present neighbours only know me old and miserable," she replied, with painful cynicism. "You see the others had to rejoice over the downcome of happiness, and beauty, and wealth."

"No, no ; it is not good for you to think that !" cried Mr. Duncan. "You own your father had done wrong. By their love of justice, the people could not help feeling it meet when punishment overtook him. Because you loved him, you suffered with him, just as God suffers with us all when we sin and suffer."

"We had scarcely any money. Of course we could not touch our father's property while there was no proof that he was dead. The only person who came forward to act as a friend for us was an old attorney of my father's—a base, bad man, who was mixed up with all sorts of wickedness. He managed our business for us somehow, and doled us out pittances from somewhere. Hannah was faithful to us. But the other servants left, partly because they were afraid their wages might not be paid, and partly, as they frankly told us, because they might lose their characters if they stayed with such discreditable people as they found we were. It was bitter. But I see now we had no right to demand others to sacrifice themselves for us.

"Agatha was quite different from me. She cried a good deal. She would have borne on somehow through those days. She would never have left off going to church. She would have gone on dealing with the old tradespeople, though they would give nothing except for ready money, and we had only pence to spend where once we had had pounds. Consequently, if ever a ray of sunshine had come near our lives, Agatha would have been there to catch it. But my blood was high and hot—it seems leaping and burning again to-day.—Oh, why did you waken me ?—I had always taken the lead. I would not bear. I could not make the best of what seemed so bad. 'Let us shut ourselves up,' I said. 'We are three together faithful to each other. We are sacrificing very little : we shall not want the world till Paul comes back ; all will then go well again.'

"Oh, it seemed such peace for a time ! Such peace not to see

the curious, sneering faces—not to have to parry the cruel, inquisitive questions. Agatha and Hannah, who had not liked the idea at first, owned I had been right, and were glad they had let me have my own way. We were almost happy. I daresay folks who have just escaped shipwreck don't notice at first that they are ashore on a desert island. I have got yards of lace which Agatha made in those days, intending them for my wedding dress! And then in the twilight we used to talk of what we should do when Paul came back.

"But he never came! I used to feel a strange sinking of heart sometimes when I read his letters; yet there was really nothing in them to prepare me for the end—when somebody else wrote, saying he was dead. I don't remember much about that time. I don't think that announcement letter was ever acknowledged. I know I never heard where Paul was buried. The days, and weeks, and months just went by.

"Do you suppose a day would come when we could say to each other, 'Now let us go out into the world again'? Never. I was the one who had the force to shut the prison door upon us all, but I had no force left to open it. And what was there for us in the outside world? Nothing.

"The old lawyer went on doling us out pittances for years. He brought papers for us to sign sometimes; and we always signed them. He paid himself well for all he did for us or lent us; but had he stripped us of everything, I don't think we should have resisted. And when the old leases of our house property fell in, he said they could not be renewed, as there was nobody who could satisfactorily grant new ones. That is how those houses first stood empty. At last he told us that he believed we might now get a decree, whereby my father would be regarded as legally dead, and we should be able to act in his stead. And the very day that he got that rightly arranged—on his way to his home after telling us that we were now the mistresses of our own property—the poor old man dropped down dead in the street.

"Was this likely to send us back into the cruel world? What were we now but three women, disgraced, friendless, helpless, and ignorant of business—deprived of the one adviser on whom we had learned to lean? When the estate thus became ours, we found ourselves in possession, besides the houses, of a funded sum of money, on whose interest we have lived ever since as you see us now.

"We never meant things to be thus. Oh, sir! it would have needed unnatural strength to build such a jail for oneself, and walk into it, reading one's own sentence of sixty years' imprisonment. We were not unnaturally strong. We were rather unhealthily weak. At first we thought it would all end when somebody came home, who never came; and after that, when we did not know what to expect, we still seemed to expect something to come some day and deliver us.

"You can't tell how time slips by when all days are alike. Agatha died, poor thing. It's odd how often the people who can't do much else can generally do that quite easily. Hannah, the servant, and I drew together more than did Agatha, my sister, and I. I always felt that Agatha somehow lost her own will in staying with us : she did not give it in heartily. Now Hannah did. Agatha stayed here because she did not know what else to do. Hannah stayed because she chose it. She could easily have got another situation, and she had her own friends and relations in the country. But she stuck to us all through, and we never had any other help or service till she was struck down by paralysis two years ago, and then we got the girl you saw. She is an orphan grandniece of Hannah, and was in a work-house in Norfolk before she came here.

"It is nearly two years since Hannah spoke. I missed her awfully at first. I missed her, dead in life before my eyes, more than I had ever missed Agatha, dead in her grave. Hannah was a woman who spoke up, and laughed heartily ; besides, she was the last I could converse with. I shall never see anybody else who knew Paul. But one grows used to anything. And I suppose God will let even Hannah and me die at last."

She spoke calmly, but almost as if she despaired of this last hope of the smitten. In truth, she had had her nervous horrors on that point. She had had recollections of the famous patriarch, Henry Jenkins, with his century and a half of earthly existence. At night she had had dreams of the weird legend of the Wandering Jew.

Mr. Duncan felt his heart sink within him at the thought of this woman's life, past and present. "But, my dear madam," he cried, "this will not do. You may live for years yet. Do to-day what you feel should have been done years ago. Why, if I have to feel that you are still sitting here like this, and the old pain is still going on, I shall never be able to bear my own happy life, for the remembrance of what I have seen and heard from you to-day."

She shook her head gently. Then she stretched out her thin, blanched hand, and laid it softly on his arm.

"It is not pain now," she said ; "it is part of myself. I am glad to have been reminded that I was not always so. It renews my hope that some day I shall be so no more. I shall die the sooner for your coming to-day ; a very light breeze shakes off a dead leaf. God bless you."

"Nay, nay, but it is not our part to meddle with what is in God's hands," pleaded the young man. "To do right to-day is our business, and that will stand us in good stead, whether we die to-night or whether we live for fifty years longer. Now, I would not say to you return to the noisy world and its ways ; you do not want that now, and your sufferings have surely earned you the right to a quiet retreat. But take some kind thought and care for others into your seclusion ; for their sake, and no less for your own."

"I know nobody to think about," she answered simply. "You cannot imagine how it confused me when I had to get Alice—that is the girl—to come here. I tried my utmost to do all the work myself, so that no other human creature might be enticed to enter this doomed house. But Hannah was not quite unconscious at that time, and when she saw me at my housework, she used to cry and wail so that it was quite pitiful to hear her. And then she fretted about the great-niece in the poor-house, where none of her family had ever been before. It was more for Hannah's sake than my own that I permitted the girl to come here. And every time she comes into the room I ask myself, 'Is she to grow up like this?' I would not have taken a girl from her own home for worlds, but this was a poor orphan, left among strangers, and even this dismal life is better than the life to which, in my young days, I was told such girls often fall. But I feel as if I was letting Alice enter into the curse which has blighted us. You see, I do think of other people when I know them," she said, forlornly.

Mr. Duncan saw his opportunity and rushed to seize it.

"Ah," he said, "the world, dear lady, is full of sin and sorrow, and needs all our help. The property which you have been led into allowing to lie waste, would educate crowds of little children, or solace hundreds of sick people, or help scores of young folk to start in life. If any of us have any means of doing good, God means us to use them to their utmost limit. He has given you the talent of wealth. Do not bury it in shut-up houses."

"You don't know what it is to be shut up for sixty years, with one's mind filled with images of crime and a bitter sense of wrong," she said. "Paul's vanished love—Paul's death—was the brightest thought I had, and you can understand if that was a diamond it was set in jet. I feel as if I had been in the dark, and you had come suddenly and let in a flood of sunshine. I am blinded. I can't talk more to-day. You have made me live more in one hour than I have lived in all these sixty years. You must come again."

"Certainly I will come again, if you will allow me," he answered. "But I should like you to have a talk with some friends of mine—through whom I heard the first hint of your existence—the Rev. Mr. Lane, of St. Mitre's, Hay Hill, a prudent, just-minded man, and the parish doctor there, Dr. Bird, who knows all the best and safest ways of doing good."

"Mr. Lane—Dr. Bird," she murmured. "But I shan't want anybody but you. I shall not take to anybody else as I have taken to you. It was partly through your strange message—and partly through a look you have. I suppose it cannot be—can it?—it is not possible that you can be any distant relation of Paul's? You have never heard such a name as Paul Desmoulins among your family connections?"

"No," said Mr. Duncan, "nor do I think I could ever have had a re-

lation of that name. There has not been to my knowledge a foreign graft on our family trees since they were planted. My father was of Scotch descent and my mother was Irish, born and bred."

"Well, I supposed it could not be," she answered, "only certainly you are somehow like my Paul. You have a curious look of him just before we said 'good-bye' for the last time."

They spoke little more to each other after that. But she took his hand and led him to the old arm-chair, where the faithful maid Hannah sat, deaf, dumb, and motionless.

"One cannot be quite sure what she knows," said Miss Turner, with a strange softening. "Touch her hand. Good as I am sure you are, you may yet be proud to do that. She was faithful for sixty years. Perhaps her heart is alive still."

But if either the old woman or the young man vaguely expected responsive sign, they were doomed to disappointment. Miss Turner drew back with a heavy sigh.

"Go," she said, "or in a minute I shall begin to cry. And it is such pain. Go, but come back soon."

The little brown serving-maid was waiting in the hall to let him out. She had not been trained to render these civilities. She only obeyed a childish longing to see that kind face once again.

And when Mr. Duncan was again out in the street he felt like one newly awakened from a bewildering dream. Had he really spent the last hour in the same world with these crowds of people bustling to and fro, buying and selling? He lifted his hat from his head, and let the fresh breeze play on his forehead and call him back to a realization of the every-day side of life.

As he went away he turned and looked up at the frowning, shut-up houses. Murders? Ghosts? He felt that Miss Turner had spoken well when she said that there had been three slow murders; and he felt, too, that he had just left the presence of the most awful of ghosts—the ghost of a life.

And what had wrought it all?

Only such sins as remained too common among the masses, who would yet shrink appalled from this, their awful sum total. Among the people hastening past him, among the dwellers on Hay Hill and in Wharf Street were many who would have no right to throw a stone at the sinful woman whose shame had been so terribly visited on her daughters, or at the covetous man the labours of whose life had literally turned to dust and ashes.

"Heaven have mercy on us all," said the young lawyer to himself, solemnly. "We may know what we do, but we scarcely know what we leave undone."

V.

It came to pass that that was young Mr. Duncan's last long walk. He went out again two or three times: he took his aunt to a scientific lecture, and there he caught cold, and then he went out next day in the rain to attend a law court in behalf of a poor old artist whose case he would not trust to anybody less keen and enthusiastic than himself.

As a consequence of all this, on the third morning he awoke in the clutches of his very familiar enemy, bronchitis. Nobody thought much of it: it is a common fact of experience that people seldom die of their chronic maladies. His aunt Rachel at first felt inclined to give him the usual lecture he received on these occasions, but there was something in his aspect which checked her remonstrances. But every time she came in and out of the sick room her face was more and more grave. And yet when, at last, the elder maid-servant, noticing this, grew grave too, Aunt Rachel felt as if she resented it. And Dr. Bird called—and called back again.

But it was quite late on the third evening after his first seizure that the type of his disease changed. Poor Aunt Rachel, who had nursed him through a dozen such attacks, and knew every step of the way, suddenly found herself on new ground.

The light of consciousness faded from the kind eyes: the cheery voice began to murmur of things which Aunt Rachel, stooping tenderly over her dear nephew, could not altogether understand.

There were some men about Hay Hill who had "thought Duncan rather soft," who, perhaps, had secretly chuckled over cheating him. He spoke of them once or twice. Perhaps they might not have liked to hear what he said. But the wandering mind did not dwell on the dark side. It went off to ancient kindnesses and pleasures. Poor Mr. Duncan, in his delirium, thanked sundry people over and over again for very infinitesimal favours received years and years before.

Then he turned to what he wanted to do. He fretted a little about the poor old artist and his unfinished lawsuit. He whispered about little presents he would like given to this one or to that. These were the thoughts of his first patient days of illness suddenly made audible. Aunt Rachel sat with straining ears. But there was a great deal she could not understand.

And then towards morning there was an awful silence. And when the street was once more astir, the blinds of Mr. Duncan's house were drawn.

"He spoke much about some old lady," said Aunt Rachel, when it was all over, and she sat dry-eyed, as brave women do sit, as long as there is something for them to do for sake of their beloved one. "He seemed so desirous to help her. Look over the list of the

clients for the old lady," she directed the clerk, "and then we must take care that she gets some other trustworthy adviser, now he is gone. But where shall we find one like him!"

The clerk looked carefully through the list of clients, through the "callers' book," and through the recent correspondence; but he could find no clue to any such person as his master's dying words had indicated.

Aunt Rachel had to get through her days of trial as best she could. There was plenty for her to do. She persisted in seeing everybody who called seeming to have any business with him. The old maid-servant could not understand her mistress. "I know how Miss Rachel loved him," she said, "an' I'm feared her head's going wrong."

In this troubled state of mind she was sweeping out the entry on the morning of the funeral, when a little pale, shy girl in a brown gown came timidly up to the door, and asked if a Mr. Duncan lived there—somebody had sent her for him. The old servant gave a side glance at the girl's shabby dress and meagre appearance, and did not even pause in her sweeping while she abruptly replied that Mr. Duncan was dead. Nor did she inquire for any name or address; she did not want to have such to deliver to her poor overburdened mistress. Her heart softened a little when she saw that the girl began to cry as she descended the steps, but it hardened again with the reflection that tears cost nothing, and are sometimes given in exchange for a great deal.

That afternoon Aunt Rachel stood weeping at her nephew's new grave in a far-off Kentish churchyard, and on Hay Hill neighbours and townsfolk exchanged solemn kindly words about the good man they would see no more amongst them.

But nobody dreamed that in a shaded, silent house an old woman and an orphan girl wept bitterly for him whom they had seen but once, and now should see no more on earth. Miss Turner repeated to herself again and again the words of his strange message. And how nearly an angel's visit had his been!

Like a touch of golden sunset on a prison or a scaffold, his death had shed a sudden sweet pathos over a hard and bitter tragedy of sixty years' length. Eyes that had scarcely wept for more than half a century rained softly for him; and in that gentle rain the mists of dull despair were washed away, and the shores of heaven gleamed once more on the gray horizon of those blighted lives. God had not forsaken them.

Yet the shut-up houses did not change. All remained the same. Nobody could guess that a petrified heart had been suddenly stirred into divine discontent and diviner aspiration.

Outwardly all went on the same for two years. Only the grocer in Wharf Street noticed that all that time the little maid-servant attended church regularly, and occasionally went out apparently for a long

walk. Also a daily newspaper was supplied to the recluse household, and a great many packets were left at the door by errand-boys.

But after two years had passed, the end came. One night the little brown maid presented herself, trembling, at Dr. Bird's door, and led off that astonished gentleman to Wharf Street. Miss Turner was ill. The doctor, knowing nothing of her constitution, was inclined to think hopefully of matters, but she, herself, knew better. She knew she was dying, and she instructed him immediately to send a nurse to help and cheer the maid in her dreary watching. Beyond this, she entered into no conversation with the medical man. He heard her name, of course, and having a strong suspicion who she was, he surveyed her dwelling and surroundings with considerable curiosity. But he found her reserved, and the young servant taciturn. Only he noticed in the dying woman an almost oppressive anxiety to consider the comfort and guide the understanding of those who would be left behind her.

The one confidence she reposed in him was on this line. She told him that, except for the young attendant, and a helplessly invalided old servant, she was quite alone in the world, but that there was a letter by her bedside, directed to the Rev. Mr. Lane, of St. Mitre's, which was to be given to that gentleman immediately after her death; and further, she charged Dr. Bird and the servant, in the presence of each other, to remember that all papers of importance would be found in a certain small oaken chest which stood on her toilet table.

She died quite quietly. She never alluded to her approaching end except by the minute arrangements she had made for it. She continued speaking to the little servant on ordinary matters till within an hour of her death; speaking, as the weeping girl afterwards reported, very cheerfully and kindly, with a strange impatient gladness in her manner. Then she lay in a sort of trance-like sleep till the end, when she opened her eyes and smiled. And with that smile on her face she died, and lay, so smiling, in her coffin.

Dr. Bird arrived on his regular visit an hour after her decease. He took possession of the letter to the clergyman, and as soon as he had given immediately necessary instructions to the nurse, whom he left in charge of the house and the grief-stricken Alice, he hurried off to deliver it to Mr. Lane.

It was brief enough. It simply repeated the instructions she had given the doctor as to her papers, and further stated that she had taken the liberty of appointing the clergyman and the medical man as her executors.

The particulars of her property were found with her will in the little oaken chest she had indicated, and it was only on examining these that Mr. Lane and Dr. Bird found that she was actually the owner of the shut-up houses, and of other property, which, well used, would be worth nearly three thousand a year.

Her will, which was drawn up by herself, but had evidently been submitted to some legal approval, was strikingly simple. The two gentlemen were named as her executors, certain sums were to be set aside as provision for her two servants, and all the remainder of her estate was to be applied to such charitable and beneficial uses as her executors should direct, only she prayed them to give due consideration, though not necessarily consent, to sundry suggestions of her own which they would find set forth in another paper, also in the box.

It became, of course, their duty to go through and examine the personal effects in the house.

But they found little to tempt their curiosity. There were no letters. Certainly few letters had come to that house for sixty years, and they decided that Miss Turner had destroyed those of prior date.

They did not know—nobody ever knew—that just before Miss Turner's coffin was closed, the girl Alice, obeying some of her dead mistress's instructions, had stolen to the death-chamber, and had slipped into the coffin, beneath the cold hand, a little packet of old foreign epistles and a tiny miniature of a young man in old-fashioned costume. The girl had looked at it as she hid it from sight for ever. The face in the picture was so fresh, and young, and happy; the face in the coffin was happy too, but it was worn and old; for all the strange mockery of girlishness had faded from Miss Turner's face during the last months of her life. But the two were one still: all the long years and the dead silence had not quenched love. "God is love," murmured the girl Alice, whose mind had its busy workings in her strange, silent life, "so how could love die?" And she pressed one kiss on the little picture of him she had never seen, and another on the cold lips of her who had been her best friend, and then she shut the coffin-lid. And she felt as if she had shut them into their joy and rest, and herself out upon a bleak and lonesome world. And the nurse met her coming from the room, crying bitterly, and thought within herself that the odd monosyllabic girl was showing a little feeling at last!

But the gentlemen knew of none of these things. They found old certificates, old law papers, old receipts, a few old profiles of gentlemen in tie wigs and ladies in elaborate turbans. They found costly old lace and quaint old jewellery, and sundry knickknacks of less value, but pointing to some far-off girlhood of taste and accomplishment. They found nothing more.

But in the front parlour, which had been the dead woman's daily living room, they found a strange trace of modern life. There was a little pinched old bookcase filled with new books. There were books of recent biography and social science. There were books concerning education and every branch of good, progressive work going forward in the world.

"Singular, isn't it?" said Dr. Bird. "She seems only to have thought of these things lately. The very will, I observed, is dated only a month or two after those fools of women took their screaming fits in your church, which, if you remember, was just before poor Duncan's death, scarcely two years ago. From the very first time she sent for me, Lane, I have always wondered what put us into her head. Of course she had heard of you as a parish clergyman and a devoted, sensible man. But I can't understand how she ever heard of me, or came to send for a doctor from such a distance."

The clergyman could not understand it, either.

"She has not favoured all the three professions," added Dr. Bird, meditatively. "So we are free to choose what solicitor we will. If poor Duncan had been living I should have named him. Do you remember his asking you about Miss Turner, and your fancying he knew more than he showed. You see I was quite right when I said I didn't believe he knew anything. I daresay he was pondering whether he could hit on any plan to get the management of her estate into his hands. Quite legitimate and proper if it was so. Any man with his heart in his profession longs to do any bit of its work which is going undone."

"And he would have managed it honestly and well for her," observed the clergyman. "He was a fine, upright young fellow, and the parish misses him a good deal. He had a wonderful way with people, he could keep them in good temper: aye, and restore them to it, when they had got cantankerous."

And then they laid their heads together in consultation. They resolved to open the Hay Hill houses first, since these seemed to have been the most talked-of and romanced over. It had leaked out in the parish that the owner of these shut-up houses was dead, and that somehow Dr. Bird and the clergyman had assumed the control of her property. Therefore, many sharp eyes were keeping special watch. So one afternoon it spread like wildfire that the doctor and the parson were in front of the houses, trying great rusty keys in the damaged old locks. The errand-boys and shopmen rushed out madly, and stood around in grinning or breathless expectation. As for Miss Wince, she was very busy executing a wedding order, but when she heard the rumour she popped her head out of the window to see if it was true, and then threw on her bonnet and shawl, and peremptorily forbidding her apprentices to move, ran down-stairs, carrying a little band box as an ostensible reason for her outing. She was on the spot just at the moment when the door gave way and permitted free access to the house she most wanted to see—the house next her own. But Miss Wince liked to look genteel, and she coquetted with her intense curiosity till Mr. Lane, who had heard of her stories, smilingly invited her to enter.

"Well, thank you, sir, I don't mind," she said. "I'm not in a particular hurry; only these boys are so rough and striving! But here's Mrs. Brown. We two will just go in together."

What was there to see? No bones: no blood-stains: no nailed-up closets. Only the broken potsherds and refuse left by the last outgoing inhabitants; even innocent marks on the walls where their little children—who must be old folks now—had stood proudly to measure their growth. But Miss Wince, once out of the clergyman's sight, grew as impatient as anybody, and pushing her way upstairs, said significantly, and with a mysterious wink, "I did not expect to see anything down here. Come on, Mrs. Brown." And Mrs. Brown, fat and puffing, came on. Nor did Miss Wince spare her till they reached the attic floor, where she turned and said, with still deeper significance:

"Does the wind have two voices? Do rats swear?"

Mrs. Brown shook her head, too breathless to answer, and they both entered the big low attic, which in this house formed the whole of the topmost story. Their feet were the first which fell here, and they left a mark on the dusty floor, almost as they might on the sands of the sea. There was nothing to be seen but a few broken boards and bottles. Yes; something more. In that corner of the chamber near Miss Wince's bedroom lay a crumpled paper. Miss Wince pounced upon it with a cry of delight, which, however, ended in a prolonged "O—oh" of disappointment. The papers were a *Police News* and another common weekly print. They bore a date only about two years and a half back, and in the newspaper was a police advertisement for the apprehension of two men accused of burglary. Some tramps—it might well be the very men the police were hunting—had carried in these treasures with them, when they found what had proved a secure retreat.

Miss Wince recovered herself speedily. She quite forgot she had ever thought of ghosts. "You'll believe me another time, won't you?" she said, with a mild steadiness. "I knew it was not the wind. I knew it was not rats. Their language made my very blood run cold, and I might have been murdered in my bed. Would you have believed me then? Or would you have said I'd killed myself, and buried me under the lamp-post at the four corners? There's been a many so dealt with, I—do—firmly—believe."

But time has passed on, and all the shut-up houses have been pulled down. In Hay Hill the ground they covered is now occupied partly by a large foundation school and partly by a building which is used for literary and scientific classes and lectures, with a public reading-room, in all which Mr. Lane takes a warm and active interest, and which he finds a wonderful ally to his teaching in the neighbouring church. Hay Hill is greatly beautified by the change. The new buildings are of red brick faced with white freestone. Mr. Lane has caused evergreens to be planted within the railings which protect the

front, as well as in the great stone vases which flank the wide steps. A little open space separates these buildings from the neighbouring houses, and there he has planted some limes, and built a fountain, and put up a seat.

There is a dove-cot, too, whose gentle inmates the school children feed. It is very fresh and pretty already, and when the trees are fully grown there will be a cool, refreshing shade, beneath which old folks will sit and talk wisdom, and young lovers will come and say things most interesting to each other.

The shut-up house in the lawyers' quarter has been rebuilt, with all the modern improvements for people occupied with sedentary and studious business. The upper floors are let as offices, and command large rentals, which are devoted to salary a lawyer who occupies the ground-floor, and who is to hold his time and talents at the disposal of poor people who need legal advice, and to render them legal help when their cause is righteous.

When the great houses in Wharf Street were pulled down, they and their long, forlorn gardens left an enormous clearing. This was turned into an open quadrangle, about whose sides were built open, stall-like shops for the sale of fish, vegetables, and meat under the strictest supervision as to freshness and purity. In the centre of the quadrangle is a great stand for the sale of flowers and plants. Over the stalls are rows of neat little rooms where young orphan girls are trained in domestic service and in attendance on the sick, the inmates of the rooms being the helplessly aged or the hopelessly crippled—the rent of the stalls and the income of the remainder of Miss Turner's property being devoted to their maintenance. Her old servant Hannah died here, a well-authenticated centenarian; and in due time the girl Alice was qualified to act as matron to the homely institution.

It is a pretty sight on a summer day to see the contented-looking old folks sitting at their little windows watching the busy scene below, while their little attendants bustle to and fro, and every now and then the white-capped matron passes with a gentle smile and a quiet word. She wears a brown dress still; and though she is the kindest of the kind, the tenderest of the tender, her tongue has never grown swift and her shyness has not vanished. She has never broken down the reserve in which she shrouds the years she spent with Miss Turner, and all that happened therein.

Aunt Rachel left St. Mitre's parish soon after her dear nephew's death. But years afterwards, when she was growing quite an old woman, she came up on a visit, and was, of course, taken to see all the wonderful improvements. She owned they were beautiful and good. Only she could not help liking best the places that were not changed—the places which remained exactly as *he* had seen them.

There was not much change in St. Mitre's itself, and she lingered

after week-day morning service, and went up and down the aisles, looking at the old carvings and the familiar memorial stones. Suddenly she paused and said aloud: "This is new."

"Yes," said Mr. Lane, who had left his vestry and come up behind her. "That is new."

It was a stained glass window, very cool and soft in its colouring. It was in two divisions, neither of them very large. In one was a figure of our Master just as He turned to bless the sick woman who touched Him in the crowd; and in the other was the figure of the sower scattering his seed on rock, and bramble, and good ground. And beneath the one was the inscription, "The bruised reed Thou shalt not break, and the smoking flax Thou dost not quench;" and beneath the other, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might."

"That's beautiful," said Aunt Rachel. "That's exactly what I should have liked to put up to the memory of my boy. The figures and the words, too, would suit him exactly. I like stained glass windows for memorials: they are types of our own tender memories, with the Light of the World shining from behind them."

"There is a strange little history about that window," narrated Mr. Lane, as they left the church together. "It was put up by the young woman who was Miss Turner's servant, and is matron of the Home of Rest in Wharf Street."

"Was it not rather an expensive undertaking for her?" asked practical Aunt Rachel.

"Well, certainly it was," answered he. "And when she came to me and proposed it (she is a very still, reserved person) I ventured to hint as much. She was not at all offended; only she reminded me that, besides her salary as matron, she possessed Miss Turner's annuity, and that since she had held her present position she had saved up three entire years' annuity for this very purpose."

"A singular fancy!" said Aunt Rachel, interested.

"So I thought," returned Mr. Lane. "I was always interested in the young woman. I am sure there is a great deal in her if it would only come out. But I am afraid she has formed an incorrigible habit of reserve. Some of these shy people do not open their minds, I fancy, for fear of being intrusive. 'Is it a memorial window?' I asked. 'Yes,' she said, simply. 'Of your mistress, Miss Turner?' I further inquired, flattering myself I was getting to the truth. 'No,' she said, 'I don't think — No, I would not put up that sort of memorial for her.' 'And would you like no name or initial introduced into the plan?' I asked; for she had made every preparation, and had brought the drawings with her. 'No, thank you, sir,' she said."

That evening Aunt Rachel asked to be taken to see the Home of Rest. She chatted with the old people and exhorted the little servants. But when she was introduced to the matron she drew her aside and took her quiet face between her trembling old hands.

"And so you put up that pretty window at St. Mitre's," she said. The matron's pale face flushed. "It is such a window as I should have liked to put up for somebody I loved," Aunt Rachel went on; "but I am old, and my means are scanty, and I could not do it. Thank you for doing it for me. It will stand for two as well as for one. What love does for love anywhere speaks for love everywhere. God bless you."

The matron's face flushed deeper. She trembled a little. When the old lady was gone she went down-stairs and looked in the visitors' book. She found there the name of Miss Rachel Blacklaw.

She did not know that name; she knew nothing of Mr. Duncan's aunt. Yet somehow she felt she would have liked to tell that old lady to whose memory she had dedicated that window. Only she always felt it had been great presumption in her to do it!



UNDER THE ROSE:

A Song.

THERE'S a secret that hides in the heart of a rose,
And a story that lurks in the song of a bird,
And the secret's the dearest a heart can enfold,
The story's the sweetest that ever was heard.
But hey! for the rose that blooms close in the briar,
And hey! for the bird that sings deep in the dell:
If we look, if we watch, if we peep and enquire,
We may miss all the beauty and break all the spell!

There's a glance in a crowd, that means little—or much;
There's a clasp of a hand—does the world feel it too?
All your own is the look, all your own is the touch,
And the world that jogs past is no matter to you!
Then it's hey! for the eyes that a sudden flash fire,
And hey! for the meaning that warm fingers tell:
If we look, if we watch, if we peep and enquire,
We may miss all the sweetness and break all the spell!

There's a word in your ear—do you catch it aright?
There's a kiss on your lips, as the twilight drops down;
And the word thro' all time makes a pathway of light,
And your heart has a vow, and your life has a crown.
So it's hey! for love's hand on the strings of the lyre,
And hey! for the lips that can kiss and not tell:
If we look, if we watch, if we peep and enquire,
We may miss all the sweetness and break all the spell!

A WREATH ON THE GRAVE OF THE LATE ANNA JAMESON.

LIVING abroad and far away from the tumult and turmoil of London, it was only lately that I stumbled on the life of the late Anna Jameson, by her niece, Gerardine Macpherson.

It is always hard for a relative, especially one so near and dear to the subject as the author of this work, in writing a biography, to do that amount of justice which is due, and which she would so much desire to render. There must ever be a nervous shrinking from every stroke of the pen which tends to lay bare before the public those thousand and one traits of intimate feeling which give colour and motive to actions, and without the knowledge of which it is impossible for a stranger to judge the life of any one.

Besides which, to praise one's own dear one, even though she be gone, is all too much like praising oneself. Thus the proposed biography runs the risk of becoming a mere narrative of dry facts, like the water marks on some steep cliff, which serve to show where the waves had fallen and risen, and nothing more.

But with all these difficulties to contend with, Gerardine Macpherson has managed to give to her narrative all the charm and interest of a living picture. As I read the book, visions of the past rose up again and again, passing and repassing ever more vividly before my view, till it occurred to me that I might perhaps be allowed to gather up the sweet memories evoked, and twine with them a wreath to lay on the grave of one who was, in her lifetime, the centre of so much love, so much admiration and respect, as Anna Jameson.

The public pronounced her a woman of rare parts and accomplishments, a lady of exquisite taste, with a thorough knowledge of all that concerns art, and a perfect intelligence of the conception and beauties of the old masters.

But those who knew her intimately prized her for something more. We knew her for a woman perfect in her generation: a woman working, and giving the example of working, as God intended a woman should work—not from any worldly motive, but always for the welfare and happiness of others.

From her earliest childhood, the little Anna showed signs of precocious talent; and her father thought it often necessary to repress the exuberance of that uprising spirit, for ever taking the lead of her companions; a tendency not infrequent with children conscious of unusual powers. But, repressed as she might be, the little Anna's heart was full of sympathy for her parents, whose disappointments

and struggles sank deep into her heart, for she had witnessed and understood. It became the all-absorbing aim of her life to assist them.

The little genius throve in mind and intelligence; and in conformity with the high aim she had set before her, and of which she never lost sight for a moment—that of helping her parents—the heroic child went forth to earn her bread at the early age of sixteen. That all through her life she proved a good, affectionate, helpful daughter is now taken into account in Heaven's courts above. And here below, too, her filial piety still shines about her name like an aureole of radiant evidence, at once the apology for and eternal reward of her energy and goodness.

Of her marriage, which took place a few years afterwards, Gerardine Macpherson could scarcely speak with much frankness. The subject was too delicate and too intimate to venture on explanations, which, perhaps, Mrs. Jameson in her lifetime had been generously anxious to conceal. But I, who am wholly unconnected with the family, and am committing no breach of confidence if I broach the subject, may be forgiven if, in justice to my dear lost friend, I repeat here what I have heard from one who knew her in her married life, and who often assured me that the incompatibility of temper so often spoken of, and so incomprehensible in the case of so loving a woman and appreciative a man, was in fact a matter of a very different character from what was generally supposed.

Mr. Jameson, himself a man of considerable taste and talent, was narrow-minded enough to be jealous of his wife's superior accomplishments. Her presence was a continual cause of gnawing envy—a grievance he could not forgive; for she commanded that attention and adulation from others which he considered due to himself alone. He took her superiority as a standing reproach to himself; and in his desire to make her mind subservient and subordinate to his own, he cruelly pushed her behind him and repressed the warm affection she offered, with a coldness, a neglect, a tyranny, which, to a loving nature like hers, was insupportable.

Mr. Jameson was not a solitary example of the mistake men make who marry women who are by nature more highly gifted than themselves. These husbands cannot understand that a woman's mind is differently constituted from that of men; and that let the wife be ever so much more brilliantly intellectual than he, still she is, and ever must be, inferior to him in that muscular judgment which comes of stronger faculties and a greater knowledge of the world; an advantage beyond all value in his domestic relations, and which must place in his hands the sceptre of mastership and dominion, if only he have sense enough to see it, generosity of soul to admit it, and reason to thoroughly understand it.

The term of Mrs. Jameson's married home life was short. She soon returned to the parental roof, and from thenceforth devoted her

whole life and efforts to supporting her parents and rendering their declining years easy and comfortable.

I never saw Mr. Murphy, Mrs. Jameson's father. He was dead some time before I joined the family circle at Ealing: which happened shortly after Mrs. Jameson's return from Rome with her niece, Gerardine. But the mother, Mrs. Murphy, was there, occupying the arm-chair by the hearth; the sweetest picture of an old lady I ever saw.

She used to sit mostly in the little parlour down-stairs, wearing her widow's cap so becomingly to the sweet brown eyes, and a complexion fresh as a girl in her teens. There used to be a picture of her, taken in her youth, while she was still a newly-married bride, painted by Collins, the Royal Academician; and apart from the interest which must attach to the subject, it was a really good picture. It used to hang in the little sitting-room, a large sized canvas, representing a sweet, graceful girl, with a scarf twisted fantastically round her head; looking out from the dark foreground with the softest hazel eyes; the same that in her old age had lost nothing of their dovelike expression, but rather matured into a motherly look, which seemed ever to invite the young to come to her for protection and caress.

Then there was the eldest daughter, who held the keys of housewifery, and who was always doing something for some one and every one; talking now to one and then to another, with her kind, consoling voice. And there was the youngest born, Charlotte, called after the Queen Consort of George the Third; because, as I always understood, she was born at Windsor: and all beaming on their friends and visitors such warm benevolence and hearty welcome, that even now, after the lapse of so many years, the memory comes back to me with all the cheering influence of the days of their action. It is something to have lived for, to remember those faces!

These were the members of the household circle. But there were two or three more who came and went to the nest, as they called it, but who had their own homes beside. One of them, Camilla, Mrs. Sherwin, bore in her whole person and manner that peculiar grace of refinement and sensibility which often stamps the children of artists. This lady is now the venerable aunt Mrs. Macpherson speaks of as the only surviving sister of Mrs. Jameson.

Another sister again was Louisa, Mrs. Bate, mother of Gerardine Macpherson. She lived in the cottage next door; and sometimes visited the nest to complete the picture of such a family as it is seldom given to see. Mrs. Bate must have been very beautiful when young; for, even then, I could scarcely take my eyes off her face when she came in, so sweet and serene was her countenance, even though her figure and contour had already lost their symmetry.

Then there was Gerardine herself, too, flitting in and out continually, and ever coming like a sunbeam into the room, so merry, humorous, and witty her young talk. She was only eighteen, indeed

little more than a child ; and in the exceeding exuberance of her spirits would sometimes forget to complete the task her aunt had set her : perhaps that of copying some drawing for the printer who was waiting to take it away. A look from that aunt, full of portentous reproach, would bring the tears into the delinquent's eyes ; but never a word in rebellious reply, never a sign of ill-temper or resentment. Poor Gerardine !

Ah, those genial hours ! where are they gone ? The hours when we would sit in the evening twilight, gathering about Mrs. Murphy's feet to listen to her tales of by-gone times, long ago in the last century.

I think I see her now, looking at us with her sweet smile as she described the fashions of those days—when the two-pronged steel forks first came into use, though the knife was still used, polite people presenting the back, vulgar people the blade, to the lips—and a hundred little anecdotes besides, all illustrative of the customs and manners of our grandmothers.

One evening, when she was more than usually communicative, she chanced to mention her mother, who, she told us, had died when she was a little girl, and absent at school. Upon which she narrated a circumstance which made such an impression on my mind, not only for its strangeness, but for the earnest conviction of the narrator herself, that I never forgot a word of it ; and therefore make no apology for reproducing it as it was told to me. It was a ghost story.

Mrs. Murphy, mother of Anna Jameson, was an Englishwoman, as Mrs. Macpherson related. Her parents lived at St. Albans, in easy circumstances, and sent their little girl, at an early age, to Dublin for education. The step seems to us a strange one nowadays, when not only London, but every provincial town in the kingdom, is known to teem with schools and all sorts of educational opportunities for the young. But in those earlier days it was different ; and the best means for acquiring accomplishments was at an establishment in Dublin, conducted by an Irish lady married to a Frenchman. I think the name was Dumoulin, but the school has long since disappeared. It was a long way to send a child, but there were many pupils who came from a still greater distance—America, the West Indies, East Indies, &c. : and when we reflect that there was neither steamboat nor railway to shorten the transit, we may consider the store set by receiving an education at a pretty high figure. But sending children, even under such difficulties as then existed, was better than sending girls to the Continent, at that time in full revolution ; and Madame Dumoulin had a world-wide reputation for giving all the advantages of foreign languages and foreign accomplishments, with the more solid and sober education so much coveted by English parents for their daughters.

Our little girl from St. Albans was then about ten or eleven, as

clearly as I can remember: certainly not more. The holidays had come, and all the pupils gone: all save our little English maiden, who seemed to have been forgotten. The lady of the establishment thought it strange, the child thought it cruel, and wept many a tear in secret; but few words on the subject were spoken between them. They waited.

In these days the voyage from Holyhead to Dublin is performed in from three to six hours, rarely more. But in the days of which I speak travellers had to trust to sailing vessels only, which would sometimes take ten days to reach the port, even in fair weather. Besides this, there was the land travelling to be considered, and St. Albans was a good way from the sea. Journeying on land was, as compared with our modern conveniences, a huge undertaking. It used to be performed in coaches, which had the knack of overturning now and then, not at all infrequently. Sometimes the horses getting lame, sometimes a wheel breaking down, and other misadventures would force the passengers to get out and remain there for days together.

Taking all which chances into consideration, there was no especial alarm created by the delay. News and tidings of loved ones did not then flash along the globe-encircling telegraph wires as they do now; and letters not only took a long time to reach their destination, but were a costly luxury to the recipient, who had to pay ninepence all over England, and fifteenpence a letter to and from Ireland. Those were the days when letter correspondents were lucky who had a friend in Parliament to frank their epistles—but franking, though it saved expense, could not annihilate time. So they had to wait, and still waited for tidings which did not come.

One night the child woke suddenly to see the room full of light. The curtains of her little bed were drawn aside, and she saw her mother stoop over to look at her; then meeting the eyes wide awake with wonder and surprise, the mother smiled very lovingly and withdrew. The curtains fell together, and the light went out.

It all happened so quickly, so unexpectedly, so like a flash of lightning (said the old lady as she narrated), that she had not time to make a movement, even towards throwing her arms about her mother's neck, when the vision had fled and the room was dark and empty.

With a happy sense of the mother's arrival, come all the way from St. Albans to fetch her, the little girl soon closed her eyes and slept the happy sleep of childhood. But no sooner did the dawn appear than she awoke, dressed herself, and hurried to the breakfast-room before anyone was up, and there waited. She saw the maid come in to lay the cloth, and bring in the tea-urn; and to this maid, with lively clapping of little hands and leaping of little feet, she told the joyful tidings of her mother's arrival. She tried hard to coax the maid to take her to her mother's room, but the discreet Abigail declined. She laughed at the child and ran away.

In due time came Madame Dumoulin herself, and the English girl danced up the room to meet her, asking leave to go and see her mother. The poor lady heard the child's pleadings with alarm; she thought she must have fever. She felt her pulse, she stroked her forehead, looked at her tongue, and gravely spoke of sending for the doctor. But detecting nothing in the examination that could warrant any feeling of anxiety, she assured the child it was only a dream; that neither mother nor letter had as yet appeared, and that they must still wait until something turned up. So again they all waited and watched impatiently.

At last a letter did come. A letter with a black seal, announcing the death of the mother on the very night she had appeared through the curtains bending over her sleeping child.

My readers will ask, did I really believe this ghost story? Certainly I did. I believed Mrs. Murphy implicitly. She was too deeply in earnest, and too secure in her own conviction, to admit the slightest doubt of what she said. And as to self-deception, illusions, dreams, &c., can all the scientific explanations which Faraday and Brewster have left us teach one true lesson as to where matter ends and spirit begins? Bishop Berkeley tells us that all things and everything in creation is but idea. In that case, matter is only matter when it comes into contact with our senses, and the ghost was a fact.

I was surprised to miss that incident in Mrs. Macpherson's book; for that she believed it as truly as I did, I know. It was she who asked Mrs. Murphy to tell it one evening as we sat at her feet listening.

I considered Gerardine as a girl of great and promising talent. She showed a decided aptitude for art; and was, as I before hinted, of great use to her aunt in copying prints, tracing diagrams, and drawing on wood for the Sacred and Legendary Art then in progress. Gerardine was draughtswoman, and the writer of this had the honour of helping as occasional amanuensis and translator when time pressed. Gerardine had an especial talent for illustrating any conceit that crossed her mind, quite wonderful to me, who lacked it completely.

One day she brought in a half sheet of note paper, covered over with figures in various and expressive attitudes of conversation round a long table, at the head of which sat the unmistakable author of the "*Divina Commedia*." She called it "*La Societa di Dante*."

I know Mrs. Jameson thought it good by the bright approving smile with which she looked at it, but she said nothing till by-and-by, when we were alone and I made some admiring remark, Miss Jameson answered: "If she would only work—if she would only keep steady to it! But she does not."

Another time she brought in a new conceit, this time set in verse, which I transcribe here. Not for its especial value as a rhythmic production, perhaps, but to show that Gerardine, though only eighteen,

already gave tokens of ability in lyric composition; which, alas! in the absorbing cares of a young family, and latterly in the sore need of bread winning, was suffered to die out for want of use. Poor Gerardine!

Here are the verses as she wrote them out in my book, and which I have preserved for so many, many years:—

THE RED ROSE: THE CAUSE THEREOF.

At first the rose which grew in lady's bower
 Was white as snow,
 And every morn a maiden culled a flower
 To deck her brow.
 One day, while stooping low to choose her treasure,
 There came her lover:
 He kissed the white neck arching in its measure,
 It crimsoned over.
 But, as the lady rose to chide that lover,
 The flush it faded;
 Passed into the rose, which, ever from that hour,
 With blush is shaded.

How little did I dream, when at my particular request she wrote out those lines in my book, that I should be publishing them to the world so many years after, and when she was dead!

We both married from Mrs. Jameson's house, though not at the same time. She went her way, I went mine; and so we never met or corresponded. Not that I thought less of Gerardine or that she thought less of me; but a heavy curtain had fallen between us, and our lives became effectually separated from that time. I now return to Mrs. Jameson, the main subject of these pages.

She used to persist in sitting upstairs writing until three or four o'clock in the morning—a habit which must have materially weakened the vital energy, and rendered it powerless when the time came for doing battle with invading disease. She tried her eyes too much, as her mother and sisters would often warn her; but she, as often, would reply that she worked best when no sound was in the house, not a footfall to interrupt her thoughts; and she assured her anxious dear ones that she never felt the worse for it.

I have introduced this remark not wholly without design. I wished to show in some degree how earnestly and unsparingly that dear lady strove to win for her family some certain means of existence when she was gone. But even then she could not always conceal that her eyes began to fail her; and although she had a lamp made especially to serve her night work—a lamp consisting of two low sockets, with supports for green shades over short sperm candles—still there were times when she could hardly see.

But her courage never failed her, nor did her large, motherly heart deny the claims of sister women all round. Thus, though at one time she was pressed hard with family cares and responsibilities, and though she possessed no competent income to serve, she nevertheless

managed to lend a helping, generous hand to the needy. She would intuitively guess the hour of necessity, and devise some delicate pretext for inclosing a five-pound note, with that feeling and thoughtfulness which formed the characteristic of all her actions. She possessed a considerable amount of influence in society, and she never omitted an opportunity of using it to help and encourage a struggling talent. She it was who first started the idea of the *English-woman's Journal*, with a view to open new avenues for woman's work. She said to me one day, in speaking of it: "There are 800,000 women over and above the number of men in the country; and how are they all to find husbands, or find work and honest maintenance? The market for governesses is glutted."

She had gathered around her quite a little coterie of aspiring young souls, whom she called her adopted nieces, and whose various talents, in whatever way they gave token, she nurtured with counsel and assistance; and she would often send us, her little troupe, for a holiday excursion at her own expense, while she herself remained at home working. I, among the rest, have to thank her for one of the pleasantest and most interesting days I ever spent. It was at Sion House.

In all my varied experience, at home and abroad, I never came across one so free from jealousy, so utterly void of envy or vanity in whatever shape, or any of the small vices which afflict our sex. She had none. Her soul was as large, as noble, as sympathetic as her heart. She loved her German friends, as it was natural she should love them: they made much of her, they gave her sympathy and affection, which her nature demanded, for she was a thorough woman. She loved her English friends, who as surely, and in as great measure, loved her in return. And there is not one living soul among all those who knew her, who will not warmly echo these poor, faint memories of that richly gifted creature.

I was delighted to recognise, in the frontispiece of Mrs. Macpherson's book, the little sketch I had so often admired in Charlotte Murphy's hand, in those by-gone days of youth and hope—alas, slipped away for ever! It had been taken by her father, one morning when he caught sight of his girl looking up wistfully at his well-filled bookshelves. Seeing it again was like bringing back a flash of one's youth.

Mrs. Jameson, as I knew her, was no longer slim. She had already gained those proportions and that portliness of contour which, with many, gives the stamp of middle age. She had a beautiful hand, and a beautiful neck and shoulders. Her features, as shown in the frontispiece, were hers still. The expression of her eyes are there true to the life, as I knew her; and the firm but delicate mouth also. These were very characteristic.


But what distinguished Mrs. Jameson above every one I ever knew was one especial charm which no picture could ever give or perpetuate.

It was her voice. Gentle, low, and sweet like Cordelia's, whose beautiful spirit lived again in her, it was even something more; it was musical. It swept the air like the notes of an Æolian harp, whose dying tones still lingered on the ear. And when I add that her choice of words in speaking was so singularly elegant and graceful that English on her lips was sweet as the Italian, it will excite little surprise that, whenever she spoke, every word was hushed in the circle in which she stood, and every ear was bent to listen.

Even the style of her caligraphy bears the stamp of elegance in the smooth, sweeping lines of its character; as, indeed, everything she touched and worked at.

I feel it wisest now to draw my notice to a close, lest I say too much; and I beg in these few words to fasten up my wreath of sweet memories to lay softly on the grave of one who lived the centre subject of so much love, so much honour, so much respect and admiration.

As for me, my best claim to be heard consists in this: that I was able to understand and appreciate her who was not only one of the most accomplished women of her day, but the most unselfish and lovable among God's chosen ones; and certainly was in the rank of those who are justly named the celebrities of the Empire.



GRATITUDE.

(After the Persian.)

I.

YOUNG love has red, red flowers,
With never a ripening fruit;
Fame has a mounting fire,
That suddenly falls and dies;
Pleasure has singing hours,
But soon the music is mute;
Hope, the child of desire,
Ever evades and flies.

II.

Only where gratitude grows
In the earth, like a desert palm,
Odours and spices rain,
And men are fain to rest.
As the sunbeams smite the snows,
So yield our hearts to its balm:
And he that wins the gain,
And he that gives, is blest!

G. B. STUART.

MOLLY: A SKETCH IN THREE TONES.

WHEN first I entered the room it seemed to me that I was confronted by a thick veil of darkness; but when my pupils, contracted by the fierce glare of the July sun outside, had become accustomed to the sudden change, I perceived that a subdued light, proceeding from three carefully-curtained windows, dimly illuminated the apartment. I advanced cautiously, threading my way amongst the quaint and oddly-disposed furniture, until I slipped into the little nook where her ladyship reclined on a soft luxurious divan. She was almost walled up between a huge black cabinet, and some curiously carved shelves filled with saucers of antique china, each of which stood with one side against the wall, so as to form a little square chamber within the large drawing-room. This corner was just big enough to contain the divan, a small low ottoman, and a tiny table, on which lay a buttercup with a long stalk, by the side of a slender vase in which had been placed a spray of white currants, the stem and leaves straggling high in the air, whilst three or four bunches of the transparent fruit hung over the edge of the glass.

Lady de Burgh was lying back amongst deep red cushions, with listless hands clasped round her knees, and contemplating the vase of currants with the rapture of one who has discovered a profound secret. She was a woman whose age it was difficult to guess, and whose height and figure could not be divined from the obscurity of the room, the nature of her apparel, and her lounging attitude. She was very pale, and her features, though hardly beautiful, were refined. She wore no ornaments, not even on her long white fingers, save her wedding-ring—and on her head her sole adornment was her soft dark-brown hair, which seemed to cling simply about her in short dainty waves, without either plait or parting. She was arrayed in a pale green dress, with a good deal of old and very yellow lace about it; it sat loosely round her neck and wrists, and though her elbows and knees were sharply defined, her waist remained unmarked behind the straight and single fold of her silken garb.

It must not be supposed that I took in all these facts at a glance. I observed them gradually as I sat by Lady de Burgh's side on the divan, whither she motioned me.

"I am very glad to see you," she said, in a low, melancholy voice. "I believe I have not seen you since the day of my marriage, and you were such a rough boy then!"

"I hope I am not a rough man," I said, trying to moderate my voice. "I was only fifteen then, and it is twenty years ago. You went abroad, and before you came back, I had gone to India."

"Ah! you must have found India very trying," she remarked. "But life is a dreary affair to all—always desire and never fruition."

"But surely you have no cause to complain," I ventured to remonstrate. "Sir John is rich and successful, and I understand you have a charming daughter."

She shivered slightly. "My daughter is a shepherdess," she said, "a mere shepherdess. I do my best for her, but she is a mere shepherdess. She is entirely her father's child, like him negatively and affirmatively. Would you believe it?—she even ridicules my cur-rants! She says fruit ripens to be eaten! *Eaten!* I can hardly support the idea. Had I had a son, he would have understood me, sympathized with me, intuitively deciphered me."

"But I hear that Miss de Burgh is infinitely lovely," I said.

"No doubt," said Lady de Burgh, "no doubt the soulless beings you have met in town think so. Numbers of soulless men and women come here, and think her perfect. And so she is, in her way, but she is a mere shepherdess, as I said before. She cannot satisfy me. But I seek no joy from those of my own hearth: I look for it but in this calm seclusion, and occasionally in the intercourse of a select few who can appreciate." And she took up the buttercup, leaned back among her pillows, and fondled the flower against her lip and cheek.

"I shall be curious to see your shepherdess," said I. "She seems well known, notwithstanding that she lives in this retired place. But I have sought her in vain in London crowds ——"

"You have sought her?"

"Yes, I wanted to know what my old friend's little girl was like, and when I found the President of the Royal Academy, and the Prime Minister, and the Poet-Laureate, speaking of her with enthusiasm, I thought I would seek her too. They, at least, must be some judges of beauty, of manners, and of mind."

"I do not agree. There is very little art at the Academy," said Lady de Burgh, slowly. "The essence of true art is failure—failure, because it dares to grope upon the hidden shores of the unknown and the invisible. The imitative art which treats of life, and of what is visible and tangible and provable, is mere copying, and it is this copying which you find at the Academy. What I have said applies equally to the Poet-Laureate's verse, which is indeed thoughtful at times, but does not pretend to fathom infinity, or to explain the secrets of nature."

I stared. Was Lady de Burgh mad?

"But the Prime Minister?" I gasped, thinking that here, at least, was practical ground.

"The Premier," she replied, "is, I believe, an honest man, but like all statesmen, he is utterly commonplace, and quite oblivious of the grand destinies of the human race. Like all politicians he sees only with the naked eye. He does his best, I verily believe, but he is stupid, and entirely ignorant of the aims of humanity, and the needs for which it is yearning."

She relapsed, with her buttercup, into her red cushions, and I sat stupefied and speechless. A faint odour seemed to pervade the room, and no sound broke the stillness. Was I in an enchanted palace?

"There is no sovereign," began Lady de Burgh again, but in so weak a tone that it seemed as if she were speaking to herself; "there is no sovereign but the inner consciousness; there is no parliament but the inter-communion of earnest friends; there is no law but the law of art; there is no art but the expression of the intense longings of humanity."

I tried to speak—I tried to move—but I was petrified, spell-bound.

Suddenly the door opened, and a flood of light rushed in. In the warm radiance stood a girl of nineteen, whose symmetry of form and beauty of feature were, or struck my excited imagination as being, faultless. She was dressed in white, with something blue round her slender waist, and a blue fillet in her hair. It was as if Aphrodite had come to gladden the earth.

"Come hither, Molly," said Lady de Burgh, raising her voice a little. "Come, and let me introduce an old friend of mine to you."

This then was the shepherdess, this tall maiden with the regal grace, and the wonderful loveliness! She closed the door, but her presence seemed to keep the sunshine in the room. I stood up, but did not venture to meet her through the maze of chairs and tables and china pots which strewed the floor, but she was presently with us, and our introduction effected, she seated herself on the ottoman, and looked kindly at me.

"I have heard of you," she said. "It is good of you to come and see us, for you are a great Indian statesman now, are you not?" She smiled sweetly, and spoke brightly.

"Dear Molly," murmured her mother, "you have no flower! How often have I told you always to carry a flower in your hand! And you have forgotten your crook! My darling, you are so thoughtless."

"I am so sorry, mamma," said Molly, with a cheerfully penitent air. "I did carry three daisies about all the morning, but they were quite dead at luncheon-time, so I threw them away, and my crook I have mislaid somewhere, but I shall find it again. Do you know," she added, turning to me, "I am as bad as little Bo-peep, for she only lost her sheep, whereas I, who have no sheep to lose, am always losing my crook!"

"Such spirits! Such gaiety!" whispered Lady de Burgh. "Such a colour! Such health and strength! So painful to a mother!"

The colour, which was a delicate peach-bloom, heightened slightly at Lady de Burgh's words. But Molly was serenely good-humoured.

"When I am twenty-five," she said, demurely, "I mean to enter a nunnery. Not the usual kind, but mamma's cloistered cool retreat here. I daresay by that time I shall be tired of riding and walking."

"You won't be able to sit here always, Molly," said her mother, plaintively. "I shall be very glad to have you in the afternoons, but someone must order the dinner, and write notes, in the mornings."

"Of course I shall do all that just as usual. I like it," said the young housekeeper. "Shall we have some tea now, mamma dear? and then we might go out."

She pulled a thick gold cord as she spoke, and it must have rung a bell a long way off, for though I heard nothing, the result almost immediately appeared in the shape of a liliputian boy in silk stockings and a satin suit, carrying a small ebony tray, containing three diminutive cups of very strong tea, a silver cream-jug and sugar-basin of exquisite workmanship, and two little platters, on one of which lay some thin slices of bread and honey, and on the other a few bunches of red, white, and black currants. A large yellow gooseberry, a piece of groundsel, and a spray of jessamine, seemed to have fallen accidentally upon the plate, after the fruit was arranged.

"Ah! my sweet nymph!" cried Lady de Burgh, clasping her hands in an ecstasy of delight: and then she took the little plate of fruit on her knee, and gazed at it abstractedly for some seconds before offering it to me, with a sigh. But I helped myself ruthlessly. I felt that Molly had picked the currants, and manœuvred their artistic simplicity, and the fruit tasted delicious because she had fingered it.

"I think you must go out now, Molly," said Lady de Burgh, in a more subdued tone than ever. "This excitement has quite overpowered me, and my brain throbs."

"Would not a little fresh air do you good?" I suggested, marveling what the excitement had been.

Lady de Burgh smiled faintly.

"No," she replied, "solitude is my best physician—solitude, and my own grand thoughts."

"Dear mamma!" ejaculated Molly, kissing her mother's pale brow very, very gently. "I am afraid that talking so much has tired you. You must rest a little, and I will bring you some flowers, and you must come out by-and-by, when the sun is low."

"When the dew has risen," murmured Lady de Burgh. "Thank you, my flower-bud."

We crept away in silence. At the door I turned, and looked again into Lady de Burgh's corner. She was absorbed. She was caressing the sprig of groundsel against her cheek.

Out of doors in the sunshine with Molly, I felt a different being. The weird feeling which had oppressed me in the drawing-room fell away, and I was a young man again. I talked, and Molly talked. I was very happy, and I hope she was too. She kept picking curious leaves as we went along, though without interrupting the conversation, until at last, as we stopped beside an iron fence, which separated the garden from a meadow, she stopped, put her hand through the bars, and gathered two dandelions.

"You must put one of these in your coat," she said. "It will please mamma when you go to say good-bye to her."

I put it in my button-hole immediately. I would have put a radish there, or a cucumber, to please Molly. She held the other in her own hand, and surveyed it rather comically.

"Mamma is so fond of these sort of things," she said. "I am afraid I am not a good daughter, but it is so difficult for me to care for what mamma calls real art."

"And what do *you* call real art?" I inquired.

"I don't know," she replied, "but I like papa's art best. If you ever come to see us again I will show you the picture-room, where papa has some beautiful Vandycks and Reynolds, and a Titian, and a Rembrandt; and the library, where he has some rare editions of Shakespeare, and other books. Do you know papa?"

"I have never seen him since his wedding-day, when everyone was saying how delightful it was to witness the union of two artist souls."

"Did they say that?" said Molly. "I did not know mamma ever thought papa artistic. She says he cannot rise above Shakespeare, and she says Shakespeare is false art. But perhaps papa and I shall grow to her ideal some day. She says it might burst upon us quite suddenly. What do you think?"

"Heaven forefend!" I could not refrain from saying, fervently. "Why in that case Sir John would burn his fine books and pictures."

"Then you don't think I shall ever be like mamma?" said Molly, rather dejectedly.

I shook my head.

"Well! I am a little glad," said she, more brightly, "for I feel as if I should never really care to sit in a dark room and contemplate. And yet I can't help being just a little bit sorry, for mamma says mine is not the highest life."

I longed to tell her she was perfect, but I forbore.

"But you lead a very useful life," I said, guardedly. "You are your father's companion and help."

"Oh! but that is pleasure," she cried. "I like riding with papa, and doing things for him, and trying to make him happy. Mamma says there is no good in any life which does not yearn over humanity. Now, I don't yearn —"

"No," I interrupted, half amused. "You do much better. You make every item of humanity happy which comes near you."

"That is nothing," she replied. "People are so kind in seeming to like to talk to me. But, do you know, I think I am beginning to improve, for I never entertained one of mamma's guests before, and you are one of her guests. But you are not like her other friends at all, for they always say *hush* when I speak, and they recite such queer poems, and talk so strangely, or else sit silent for hours, and then they call me a shepherdess!"

"I wish you would come and mind my sheep!" I exclaimed.

"Have you sheep?" she asked, simply.

"Only figuratively," I replied. "I will tell you what I mean another day. Now I must go and say good-bye to your mother."

We went back to the house, and Molly plucked a half-dead rose on our way, and placed it in the centre of her bunch of withered leaves. But at the drawing-room door she transferred this strange bouquet from her hand to mine.

"Mamma could not bear two voices again," she said. "Please give these to her."

A chill came over me as I re-entered the gloomy apartment, but this time I made my way more easily to Lady de Burgh's side. She still held the groundsel in her hand, and laid it tenderly on her knee as she received Molly's little bouquet, and turned it round.

"Dear pretty rustic!" she said, sadly. "She has no originality, no innate appreciation, no immense purposes, but she is obedient. She has no agonising passions, but she is fond."

"She is a goddess," I said, warmly.

Lady de Burgh looked at me in mournful surprise.

"Goddesses," she observed, "were merely terrestrial creatures, deified by a vulgar admiration for strength or beauty. They had no soul, I do not speak of the common soul which animates us all, but of that vast spring of appreciation, that pure grasp of the intangible, that intuitive perception of profundity, that ecstatic soul which is possessed by the very few."

Then she noticed the dandelion in my button-hole, and, emerging from her cushions, she touched it with the tips of her fingers.

"You are very artistic," she said. "I can see it at a glance. We must be great friends. But I must not keep you longer now, for I have much to occupy my mind before I sleep to-night."

So I left her, with her dead rose, and her groundsel, and her grand thoughts. But Molly was in the hall, with her happy genial manner, and when I had said good-bye to her, and departed, my last impression of that house was one of joy and serenity.

The railway station and the hotly-cushioned train seemed very prosaic after my interview with Molly. But, as I was whirled back to London, the beautiful truth entered, with conviction, into my mind, that the practical conveniences of life were the vehicles of romance. How often might not this commonplace train carry me again and again to the side of her whom I already regarded as my divinity! And, though, when it all came about, the mother called me a clown, and the father a thief, for daring to woo their daughter, what cared I when I had won that peerless maid to be the shepherdess of my figurative sheep in good earnest?

DOWN A SALT MINE.

HOMER had sung the praises of salt long before Plato made a speech in honour of its virtue; the Romans compared the utility of salt even to that of the sun; in every language, whether ancient or modern, we meet with proverbs testifying to the importance of this wonderful mineral. In all known times and in all known places (with the fewest possible exceptions) salt has been duly appreciated.

There was a time when the Wieliczka salt mine—the greatest salt mine in the world—was of great repute as one of the grandest sights of the country. Wieliczka, however, does not lie on the beaten track of the regular tourist, and therefore is less spoken of now than it used to be. People in these days seldom take the trouble of going out of their way for the sake of anything worth seeing.

Nevertheless, Wieliczka is not without its visitors; a good many people still go to see the works in the course of the year. Few travellers will pass by the spot without halting to see the mine; and besides these chance guests and stray foreign visitors, a number of invalids resort to the place for the sake of its salt springs, sulphur and malt baths.

The small town of Wieliczka in the Podgorze district ("Podgorze" means below the hills) in Galizia—not Spanish *Galicia*, but Galizia, that part of Poland which belongs to Austria—is situated in a pleasant valley, open to the north, and surrounded by lovely hills to the south, which enclose the place in a semicircle. Part of the houses—mostly of wooden architecture—stand in the hollow, others on terraces ascending the gentle hills.

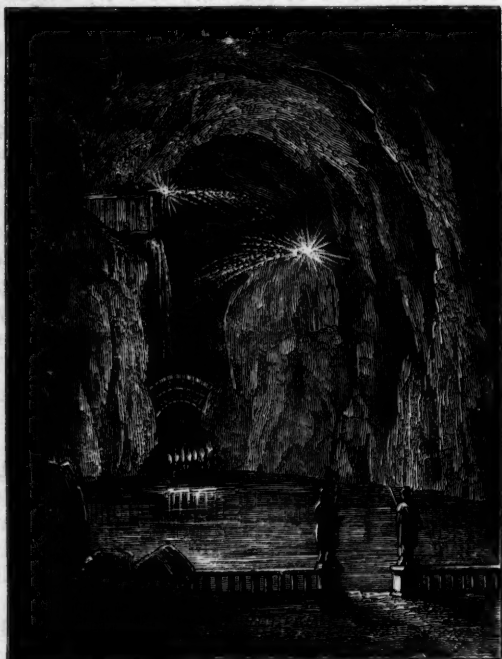
Looking from some eminence over the pastoral neighbourhood, we can, without a great stretch of imagination, go back a few centuries, and, blotting the small town out of the picture, fancy that we see nothing but the vast and lonely extent of pasture ground; lonely but for the white dots, representing shepherds and their flocks, which here and there break the monotony of the aspect.

To-day, entering the town, we notice that it is a quiet, cleanly-looking, nice little place, with a large market-square, an old castle in its centre, and a certain air of contentment about it. The inhabitants are good-looking, well-conducted, polite people, speaking the soft, rather drawling Mazur dialect of the elegant Polish tongue.

Very far from the unhealthy, squalid, pinched, melancholy figures you are wont to meet in other mining districts, the Wieliczka miners exhibit perfect ease and contentment in their handsome features, in the whole bearing of their well-proportioned limbs. They are

passionately fond of their mine, and proud of it in proportion; they can understand life in and for their mine only. They have good public schools for their boys and girls, and other popular institutions, some of which you would scarcely expect to find in an insignificant place of seven or eight thousand inhabitants. Then there are the baths already mentioned, which are of some repute in the neighbourhood.

Having pointed out the insignificance of the town above ground,



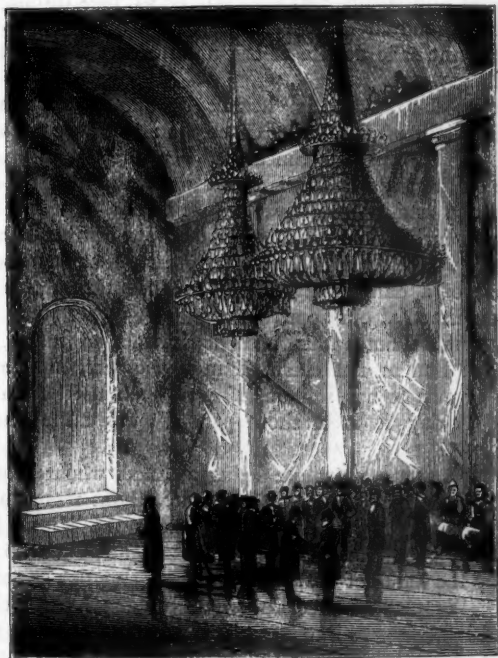
IN THE SALT MINE.

let us at once introduce you to the far more extensive subterranean city of Wieliczka, taking you down by one of the two chief entrances to the mine. Whether we descend the four hundred and seventy steps of the spiral staircase, the "Franciszek," constructed in the year 1744, during the reign of August, Elector of Saxony, or whether we are conveyed down by means of ropes at the "Danielowicz," the second entrance, we land at a convenient point for our expedition.

We cannot take you over the whole of the salt city. It is a labyrinth of lanes, streets, squares, passages, caves, bridges suspended across precipices, steps leading into black gulfs or up crystal mounds, ferries over sheets of water, and so on. Some one has made

the precise calculation that a walk from Cracow to Vienna would last as long and be more easily accomplished than passing through all the corridors and chambers of the mine of Wieliczka. We must, therefore, limit our examination to the chief points of interest in this strange land.

While walking or driving down, we are informed that the ground into which we penetrate is of manifold composition. The salt is found unmixed with earth, pure, clear, and hard, in immense rock-like



THE BALL ROOM.

masses. It is worked with the miner's hammer or axe, like any other hard mineral; sometimes, but rarely, it is blasted with powder. Large blocks of salt are separated from the salt-rock, divided into smaller ones of perfectly square shape—the salt crystallises in cubic form, and the immense formless rocks are easily cleft into cubes—and conveyed to the upper world, looking either exactly like frozen water, or with a slight greyish green hue in the colour.

Through the long and lofty western gallery we pass into one of the largest caves of the place—the Chamber of St. Ursula. We look with astonishment at the walls, supporters, lofty vaulted roof of what at first sight we can only take for rock-crystal, all shining and glitter-

ing with the reflection of the light of many torches, and we begin to experience that sort of dreamy sensation which would undoubtedly accompany us in an expedition through fairyland. We feel as if we were standing upon the threshold of the mysterious kingdom of mountain-goblins, an impression which is increased on our beholding a shining crenelled wall, looking like the wall of an old fortress, with an archway in the middle invitingly opened to admit us. A bridge, loftily reposing upon the bold arch, leads to some higher region, but we are bound downwards, and accordingly we pass through the archway, down a hundred and twenty salt steps, and straight into the largest room, the *salle de fête* or ball-room of the mine—the Michalowicz Chamber.

It is lit up for our special benefit by numberless wax lights in lustre chandeliers of the same description as those seen in every ball-room, with the only difference that here the crystal prisms of the lustres are of the same material as the walls, the roof, the supporters of the gallery, and the gallery itself: namely, of salt. Our little party forms a dark, uncongenial speck in those lustrous surroundings. Involuntarily we look round for the fairy-party that lit these lights for the purpose of a dancing-night, and suppose that the light-footed company dispersed at our approach.

In very remote times this hall had witnessed many a brilliant festival, when human, not elfish element, was predominant; but for a century or two it has seldom, if ever, been used for its original purpose. To-day it is a show part of the mine and nothing more.

An empty ball-room "whose lights are fled, whose glory's dead," is of melancholy aspect, and we leave it without regret in order to descend another flight of steps and to enter the Kloski Room, the most beautiful of all; a gem, whose ornaments, cut into the solid salt-walls by the hand of real artists, are of superior conception and execution. We pass on over a wooden bridge; looking down from it right and left, we gaze into utter darkness; a fire-brand flung from the parapet of the bridge into the black gulf makes us realize the unsuspected depth of the precipice beneath our feet. Our way now leads us through another cave, to the fourth storey below.

Vast excavations, dimly lighted, lie before us; we have some difficulty in imagining that human hands have hewn out, bit by bit, this immense space. We step boldly forward in the twilight to explore this unknown region, but are soon arrested in our progress. We stand on the brink of a lake. This sheet of water, surrounded by salt rocks of fantastic shapes, is the largest of the sixteen lakes of this strange subterranean country. It is the reservoir in which all the waters of the mine mingle their floods. Rowing boats invite us to cross over to the other side. Almost involuntarily, as if drawn to it by magic, we step into one of them. Can any one of us at this moment fail to remember the mysterious River Styx and Charon the

old boatman? Ah, that some of us could sip but the tiniest drop of Lethe out of these greenish-grey salt-floods!

As we row forward the scene is suddenly illumined by a soft white light, streaming from the heights of some grand crystal rocks which throw their deep shadows on our course. The utter stillness is broken only by the splash of our oars, or a softly murmured word now and then. In front of us the shining crystal rocks narrow until there is merely a sort of porch left for us to pass through into another immense expanse of water. The tops of the two nearest rocks, forming this entrance, are united by an ornamental arch bearing in large transparent letters the miner's greeting: "Gluck auf," the "All hail!" of the German miners in any subterranean part of the world.

Our progress is a slow one, but as we have no hurricane to encounter on this still lake, we land safely at some convenient steps belonging to a parapet of salt, at the foot of a salt statue of the saint whose image Roman Catholics are so fond of placing at the water-side.

Thence we pass through the Steinhauser Chamber and some crystal-vaulted corridors, up a well staircase, and into the chapel of St. Anthony, the larger one of the two consecrated chapels of the mine, both of them being worked into the salt rock. The entrance arches, the walls and roofs, the columns, the altar, crucifix, candlesticks, and lamps; the pulpit, which is of excellent workmanship; the statues—all are of salt.

The salt in this place is not perfectly white, but of a greenish-grey hue, which, far from marring it, increases its beauty.

This chapel was hewn out of the living salt-rock about the year 1690, during the reign of the noble and gallant king Jan Sobieski.

The salt mine of Wieliczka holds its yearly festival on the third of July; on that day mass is read in this chapel. The ordinary services are held in the smaller and less ornamented chapel, also cut out of salt, as well as all its interior fittings. No miner would be missing from church on the third of July—they assemble in full number to attend at the service and glorify God with beautiful harmonious hymns, sung with sonorous voices, and with the utmost devotion. It is an imposing ceremony. Piety is a chief feature of the character of the Poles in general, and these quiet, sincere, simple-hearted mining-people of Wieliczka possess a great share of the national treasure.

On the afternoon of the third of July the mine is grandly illumined in all its different parts, and is visited by a great number of people; this offers the best opportunity for strangers to inspect the salt-city.

When we have visited the chief parts of the mine, we wish to see a little more of it—a little of what not everybody can see. Our request is granted, and we wander again upstairs and down, through shining, glittering, glistening, vaulted corridors; we pass under crystal arches, and over bridges where the dark salt river runs at our feet

with a dull sound ; we stop at a long vaulted cave roughly hewn out in the salt, without pretence to architectural beauty and brilliancy, and we find ourselves actually in the—stables. There are several establishments of the kind in the mine. More than a hundred horses are actively employed at the works, and seem to live comfortably and without any visible detriment to their health in these underground parts without seeing the open air and daylight for many years. All the caves we have seen are perfectly dry—else the objects, walls, &c., of salt would not have kept so well during long centuries. The prevailing temperature throughout all the mine is of an icy coldness.

Then we have a peep at the new excavations and the work going on there—for until now we have wandered through regions where the miner's hammer has not been heard for centuries.

We see the process previously described, and then, in order to avoid going back all the way to the chief entrances, we are conveyed in the wake of some shining, white, brilliant salt-cubes to the upper world by the simple rope system. Our excursion is at an end.

The shepherd Wielicz, says the legend, discovered the salt-mine about the year 1250.

Passing in the course of centuries through many ownerships, it returned, after the treaty of peace at Paris, in 1814, into the undisputed possession of Austria. It is now thoroughly well managed and yields a sufficiently good income to the crown, besides providing a good number of officials with a comfortable living, and giving regular employment to the mining population of the town, without mentioning the many strangers who have found in Wieliczka a haven—not of rest, but what is much better here on earth—of honest work.

Several new mines, especially those at Strassfurth, in Germany, have endeavoured to compete with Wieliczka, but have not as yet been able to reach its standard. Wieliczka is still the greatest known salt-mine in the world, and by its ornamental antiquities the most curious and interesting.

MARIE ORM.



THE FORTUNE-TELLER.

AN AMERICAN STORY.

BY FRANCES E. WADLEIGH.

THE sun was low in the West and Judge Harnett felt the soothing influences of the balmy summer evening. He was at peace with himself and all the world, and listened dreamily to the childish chatter of his only daughter, who sat beside him on a rustic bench in the old-fashioned garden, whilst he contemplatively smoked his after-dinner cigar.

Suddenly there appeared before him an unwelcome and unexpected guest. One glance at her was enough to destroy all his previous luxurious ease of mind and body, without waiting for the menacing words which, without courteous preface, fell from her lips.

"Why do you persecute my race, Judge Harnett?"

"Begone, Nushbawun!" returned the Judge severely.

"I will not begone, Judge Harnett, until I have said my say."

"If you will not go of your own accord, I will have you driven off!" continued the Judge, a slight trace of amusement as well as anger in his tones.

"You cannot, and you dare not," answered the intruder, slowly and with determination, as she took a step or two nearer, and looked him squarely in the eyes.

The defiant speaker was an old, malicious-looking Indian named Nushbawun. She was the last of her tribe who remained in the neighbourhood of Milford. Indeed, there were not a hundred of her race to be found in the whole State of N——, and she herself was not even half civilized. She bore an uncanny reputation. Those who scorned to own themselves weak enough to believe in witchcraft or diabolism, said she was a thievish, hypocritical old squaw; others, less strong-minded, feared her, and tried to propitiate her: not that they really believed she was a witch, or had the "evil eye"—if their own statements might be trusted.

So what with her herb medicines for the sick, whether man or beast; her well-made baskets, her charms and philtres sold on the sly to credulous lovers, and her prophecies of future events for the believing or the frolicsome, old Nushbawun drove a thriving trade and was a power in and around Milford.

"I have a mission to you, Judge Harnett, from my people," continued she after a moment of defiant silence, "which you must hear. In Congress, eight days ago, you said ——"

"Why, Nushbawun, do you read the newspapers?" asked the Judge with a laugh.

"No. But your words were hardly cold upon your lips, before they reached me and others whom you slandered. Ah, you jeer at me; you say I am a humbug, a deceiver, but there are things beyond your ken; things——"

"Nushbawun," interrupted the Judge, "what is it you want? Tell me at once, or my servants shall turn you out."

"What do I want? Justice! Justice!" almost screamed the woman. "Justice for my race, for the owners of this land which you and your fathers wrested from us with lying promises!"

"I never stole your land. My ancestors bought this farm, and many an acre more, from your forefathers and paid them their price."

"Yes, *your* land was honestly gained. But it is you who have wronged us. You said—and your words were printed and scattered far and wide—that the Indian is a drunken, dirty, thievish, murderous, lying animal. Did you not say it?"

"Yes, or words to that effect. What of it?"

"To-morrow you return to Washington; when you get there you must unsay those words——"

"I must!" interrupted the Judge in amused contempt.

"Yes, you must; I command it! I command you to deny your statement." And Nushbawun spoke authoritatively. One might have fancied her a dusky queen issuing powerful edicts.

"See here, Nushbawun; don't waste your breath; you know you can't impose upon me; I don't care two straws for your commands. Your familiar—black cat, or whatever you pretend it to be—informed you correctly as to my speech, and I repeat it now. What is more, I tell you to your face that you are one of the worst of the whole gang. Too lazy to work, you wring money, food and clothing from credulous fools by pretending to tell fortunes: to conjure evil spirits out of or into men and beasts. You are not murderous only because you live within reach of the law, which, unfortunately for us, your comrades in the far West do not."

"Then you refuse to do us justice?"

"I am one of the unsentimental few who do render you justice! Others, who know less about you, prate about the 'noble red man,' the 'ill-used owner of the soil.' I, if I could do as I would, would put an end to ninety-nine hundredths of you and wipe you off the face of the earth," answered the Judge, not angrily but firmly.

Now Nushbawun was not a picturesque squaw. Her long, unkempt black hair straggled from beneath a man's hat and fell in elf locks over an evil face. Her eyes were bleared, watery and wicked. Fumes of bad whiskey issued from her large lips and jagged, fang-like teeth; her fingers were long, claw-like and grimy; and her apparel was nondescript both as to colour and material.

As the Judge boldly declared his opinion of the red man she glared at him with venomous hatred in every feature. When he finished speak-

ing she drew herself up to her full height, and brandishing in the air an oddly-forked stick which was her constant companion, she cried :

"Who is murderous now? It is only because *you* live within reach of the law that our lives are safe. Judge Harnett, I have given you a chance to do us justice and you refuse with added insults. Now hear my words and heed them. This day ten years, the eve of the longest day in the year, the eve of the day that should see your daughter begin her twentieth year, you will recall this hour, this scene, and this curse that I now pronounce upon you ; you will think of Nushbawun and her wrongs, but all too late ; you will weep, your heart will be wrung—and there is the cause !"

And with the last words, she waved her crook over Minnie's head, and suddenly disappeared, while the Judge turned to put his arm around the pale, frightened child.

Poor little Minnie burst into tears, and no amount of logic, persuasion, or caresses from her father could convince her that she was not henceforth under a spell, or that Nushbawun's curse could fail to be accomplished.

Judge Harnett could not remain many hours with the child, as he was obliged to start for Washington the next day. He had come home in the very midst of an important and tempestuous Session of Congress to attend the wedding of his eldest son, and had to hasten back to his post of duty, where for six years he had been representative for his native county. He was a man of untiring industry and unquestioned honesty, and was deservedly popular in Milford. At the last election no one had come forward as opposition candidate, until, for very form's sake, one of his townsmen had consented to do so at the last moment. It would spoil all the fun and excitement of an election in the United States, if there were not at least two candidates for every office. The old woman's dire predictions had no effect upon the Judge's Indian policy. Never was there an Indian bill brought before the House of Representatives, that he did not raise his voice in protest against furnishing the aborigines with whiskey to inflame their evil passions, and arms and ammunition to cut off the flower of our youth.

But Mrs. Harnett viewed the matter in a different light. From that hour she looked upon Minnie as either to follow her dead sisters to an early grave, or to suffer some great trouble in atonement for her father's hard-heartedness.

As the years rolled on, and Minnie grew to be a tall, graceful girl whose beauty and sweet temper were universally acknowledged, the mysterious evil that awaited her caused her to be regarded with a special tenderness.

For Nushbawun's curse was widely known and generally believed in ; the more so because some of her subsequent prophecies were fulfilled with remarkable exactitude. In a fit of intoxication, Caleb

Dawson drove her from his kitchen one sleety night, and as she went away she warned him that liquor would bring him death within a twelvemonth; and it did so. Josiah Patterson refused to give her a turkey one thanksgiving-day, and she truly foretold the sudden flitting of his wealth. Mrs. Jamison was hysterically inconsolable the day her husband was buried; Nushbawun said that in six months she would wed again, and the widow's mother, scandalized, gave her a scolding. At this Nushbawun bade her set her house in order, for the wedding would surely take place, and would be so little to her liking that she would die by her own hand the day after. All of which actually happened. To be sure, Dr. Barton and Judge Harnett said that anyone could have predicted Dawson's death, that Patterson's poverty was a natural consequence of his extravagance, and that the Jamison prophecy caused its own fulfilment for the simple reason that the two women had not mental strength to resist a fancied fate. But what availed the opinion of two men, when the whole township was against them? Nushbawun had certainly predicted these things; they had certainly happened; therefore the squaw must be infallible, they argued.

When Minnie was about sixteen she was very ill with pneumonia; everyone then thought that death was Nushbawun's curse. But she recovered, and grew strong and beautiful. When two or three worthless lovers appeared the gossips sighed; but as they were refused, a miserable married life was evidently not it.

Philip Renwick, Dr. Barton's nephew, came to Milford to assist his uncle when Minnie was about eighteen, and as soon as the two young people met, their hearts went out towards one another. Impulsive, and sure that he had now loved for the first and only time, Philip declared his love within three months.

"Yes, Philip," answered Minnie after much sweet pleading from her lover, "I do love you, and for that reason I must say *no* to you."

Pressing her yielding form to his manly heart, he whispered:

"But you cannot mean both *yes* and *no*, my darling! You have owned that you love me: why may I not ask your father for you? He does not dislike me, I think."

"Oh no; he esteems you very highly. But you know my misfortune."

"Your misfortune?" echoed he, mystified.

"Yes; there is a dark fate in store for me, and I cannot let you link your life to mine, lest the curse fall on you too."

"Nonsense, Minnie. You don't really place any faith in that wretched old Indian's ravings, do you?" asked Philip with loving raillery.

"Hush, hush! Don't speak so of her."

"What harm can that old hag do to me—or to you either?" answered Philip, kissing again and again the sweet red lips which

trembled with fear for him, and the gentle eyes that moistened with tears on his account.

"Don't, Philip!" cried Minnie, as she tried, rather feebly, it must be confessed, to draw from his embrace. "It is of no use for you to love me; I shall not live to be twenty—or to marry."

"Yes you will, if the unremitting care of your attending physician can prolong your life," laughed he.

When Judge Harnett was appealed to by Philip, he readily gave his consent to the proposed marriage, but his wife was not so cordial. When alone with her husband she said:

"I do not see how you could have said *yes* to young Renwick without any proviso whatever. Just think how little we really know about him! Perhaps this curse is to come through him."

"O hang that curse! For a sensible woman, Minerva, you do harp most abominably on one string. I'm sick of it," said the Judge. But his tone was not as cross as his words.

"So am I; sick of hearing as well as of thinking of it. You are incredulous, I know, but at least you can go to his former home, and inquire all about Philip's past life."

As that was only common sense, curse or no curse, the Judge agreed to it, and his inquiries brought to light nothing unfavourable to his would-be son-in-law. So the engagement was a settled thing.

With his usual impetuosity, Philip began at once to talk of the wedding-day, but Minnie would not, for a long time, consent to even discuss the possibility of marriage.

"Can I never persuade you that you are morbid on this subject?" said he one day.

"No," replied Minnie, sadly; "and what is more, you cannot convince me that your incredulity is genuine."

"I think I can! You believe, don't you, that I am in a hurry to be married? that I'd go for ring and licence this very hour if you would permit me to?"

Minnie laughed as she replied demurely:

"I think you have hinted as much once or twice."

"I certainly shall be neither happy nor contented until you are my own dear wife, and so strong is my belief that that old Nushbawun is a humbug that I hereby solemnly appoint the twenty-first of June next, the day *after* the Awful Unknown is to take place (according to the squaw), as our wedding-day. Now do you believe that I really scorn the prediction?"

"Oh Philip! you did not see her and hear her as I did that day! Child as I was, she frightened me; her tones were awful; she cast fierce looks at me——"

"You have heard '*Il Trovatore*,' have you not?"

Surprised at his apparently irrelevant question, Minnie responded in the affirmative.

"Then perhaps you remember the first scene, where Ferrando

sings"—and Philip, in a rich baritone voice, sang with mock tragic gestures :

"Abbietta Zingara, fosca vegliarda!
Cingevasi simboli di maliarda;
E sul fanciullo con vico arcigno,
L'occhio affiggea torvo, sanguino!"

"But Philip, that old witch did do mischief," exclaimed Minnie.

"To her own child, not to the Count's, you remember. Now, to remind you that even first-class, operatic, Spanish gipsies' curses are not infallible (and so, of course, an every-day, half-civilized American Indian's drunken ravings cannot be), every time I hear you allude to Nushbawun I shall sing 'Abbietta Zingara,' no matter where we are."

Philip kept his word, and Minnie so dreaded to hear Ferrando's song, knowing that it was intended as kindly mockery, that she rarely alluded to her own terrors. But Philip could not be always with her, nor could she readily overcome the fear of years. So as the dreaded day drew near, both Minnie and her mother became pale and sad.

The morning of the twentieth dawned clear, balmy and beautiful. Up to this date no shadow of evil had fallen upon Minnie. But then, argued the credulous, old Nushbawun had said that it was to be on, not before, the twentieth that Judge Harnett was to be punished through his child.

In accordance with the Judge's orders, all was ready for the morrow. Guests were bidden from far and near to witness the marriage in the morning, to join in the sumptuous wedding-breakfast at noon, and to while away the afternoon—evening too, if they chose—with music, dancing, and merriment. Every one who was invited had accepted with seeming alacrity; *seeming*, for in their hearts most of them felt that it was all a mockery, a vain braving of fate.

The bridal dress and veil were marvels of fineness and beauty; but Mrs. Harnett gave a tearful assent to Minnie's whispered request that she might be robed in them for her coffin.

The day—oh, how long it seemed!—crept slowly by. One relative after another arrived from distant towns, so that before sunset the house was full. By sunset, too, Minnie and her mother were so nervous with excitement and apprehension, that Dr. Barton drew Judge Harnett and Philip aside, and said:

"Those two are almost crazed! We are the only ones who do not look and speak as if death were already in the house. My advice is to give each of them a soothing draught, a strong sedative, that will tide them safely over the rest of the day. If we don't do something poor Minnie will really go crazy; her brain is half on fire now; and so the old witch—or demon—will see her prophecy fulfil itself."

His listeners agreed with him, and he added:

"In the breast pocket of my linen driving-coat, Philip, you will find some powders that I brought over for this very purpose. Mix two of them in two tumblers half full of water, and administer them to Minnie and Mrs. Harnett."

Philip hastened to execute his uncle's command, and when he handed the glass to Minnie he said :

"Here, dear, drink this ; it will quiet your nerves ; you are worn out, and I don't want a ghostly bride to-morrow."

"To-morrow !" echoed Minnie sadly, drinking the opiate.

"Yes, to-morrow," repeated he firmly. "Now lie down on this sofa for a few moments, and you, Mrs. Harnett, settle yourself comfortably in this big arm-chair. Go to sleep, both of you, and when you wake up, you will be happier."

So, taking no notice of the clinging fondness with which Minnie returned his kisses, as if saying farewell, he darkened the windows, and left the room.

The evening passed, and midnight came, but the sleepers remained secluded.

"Twelve o'clock !" cried Philip as the last stroke died away from the clock on the mantelpiece. "Let's wake them, and have a laugh at their expense."

"No, no ! Let them sleep a little longer," answered the Doctor. "My dose was a strong one, and they may not waken for some time. Send the visitors to bed, and we will doze here in our chairs until morning."

So the three gentlemen sat by the open windows in the library, smoking, dozing and occasionally talking ; and watched the sweet June night, the shortest in the year, turn from semi-darkness to the glorious twilight of an early midsummer's day. At last the sun shot his beams athwart the sky, and then showed a broad, smiling face in the east.

"Sunrise !" cried Philip. "Now it is day, my wedding-day ! The twentieth is past and gone : let us rouse the sleepers."

And followed by Philip and his uncle, Judge Harnett led the way into the darkened room, threw open the shutters, and flooded the apartment with daylight.

Kneeling down by Minnie, Philip clasped her hands in his.

"Wake up, little wife !" he cried. "You have slept over the twentieth ; the sun of another day greets you !"

Minnie and Mrs. Harnett both started up quickly, crying in alarm :

"What has happened ? What is the matter ?"

"Matter ? Nothing, thank God !" replied the Judge.

Philip could not speak ; his lips were otherwise engaged ; but the Doctor, with tears in his eyes, growled :

"The matter is that Nushbawun is a humbug, and you have been two dear, deluded fools. The dreaded day is gone, and in just six hours there will be a wedding in this house."

There was no disputing facts ; it was indeed the twenty-first. And such a merry wedding as it was ! If Nushbawun had ever returned (but she was never again seen in that vicinity) she would have been town prophetess no longer. No one would have had faith in her after this egregious failure.

THE TWO PATHS.

EAGLE ! that o'er the sunbeam's track of light
 Flingest the shadow of thy stately wing,
 Hiest thou home from distant wandering
 Unto thine eyrie on the mountain height,
 Amid dark pine-groves, where lone waterfalls
 Each to another calls ?

No sound awakes the echoes, kingly bird !
 Save when mysterious tones and murmurs thrill
 The dim recesses of the caverned hill
 Through the still night,—or heavy leaves are stirred
 As sad winds wake the heart of solemn woods
 In rock-girt solitudes.

Bird of the shadowy plume and fearless gaze !
 Thou art an emblem of the gifted heart
 Called out and chosen for its nobler part,
 A lonely wrestler in life's thorny ways ;—
 And yet it is a glorious thing to claim
 Thy deathless crown, O fame !

* * * * *

Into the light thy trembling shadow floats,
 White dove ! returning through the evening skies,
 Flushed with the crimson sunset's burning dyes ;
 On the soft stillness thy caressing notes
 Fall as thy tired wing flutters to the rest
 Of thy low woodland nest.

Thy home is where the greenwood shadows fall
 On fairy dingles bright with summer flowers,
 Where pleasant breezes fan the chestnut bowers,
 And the glad chimes of fountains musical,
 Amid the dancing leaves and blossoms, play
 All through the laughing day.

Like thee and thy bright life, oh, gentle dove !
 Is the glad spirit bound by holiest ties
 Of kindred hearts and loving sympathies
 To the warm shadow of home's sheltering love ;
 And ever in that sunny atmosphere,
 Abiding without fear.

J. I. L.

